

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

International Federation on Ageing 10<sup>th</sup> Global Conference  
Climate for Change – Ageing into the Future  
3 – 6 May 2010

## The Art of Ageing: Creativity Matters

Margret Meagher

Executive Director

Arts and Health Australia and

The Australian Centre for Creative Ageing

[www.artsandhealth.org](http://www.artsandhealth.org)

[margret@artsandhealth.org](mailto:margret@artsandhealth.org)



# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## Healthy Ageing: Creativity Matters

Creative Ageing is a term that refers to the health and wellbeing benefits for older people who engage in creative activities.

Creative Ageing is emerging as a specialised area, within the arts and health field, at a critical time in healthcare globally, challenged by a rapidly increasing ageing population.

In April 2008, the Office for an Ageing Australia appointed well known actress Noeline Brown as Ambassador for Ageing to promote healthy, positive and active ageing messages within the Australian community - to minimise or delay disability and lead promotional activities to ensure communities value and respect older people.



# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## Ageing in Australia

- People are living longer and are more likely to face life with a chronic health condition such as diabetes, arthritis, asthma, cardiovascular conditions, dementia, depression
- There is increased social isolation in the community through family fragmentation and grief issues associated with the loss of a partner or friends of a similar age
- In 21<sup>st</sup> century, there are greater expectations of the right to enjoy a high quality of life alongside major demographic changes as the baby boomer generation ages
- Healthcare is now focussed on being and keeping well and prevention rather than focussing on the management of illness

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## **The Search for Effective and Cost Efficient Healthcare Solutions for the Ageing Population**

The significance and value of 'Creative Ageing' is growing in Australia.

Arts activities – such as music, dance, theatre, writing, painting – have been shown, through quantitative and qualitative studies, to have a positive impact on health and wellbeing on people of all ages.

Increased scientific research is necessary to influence government policy.

There is a strong business case for utilising the arts in healthcare in terms of patient care – including reduced hospital stays, less reliance on medication, effective falls prevention, improved wayfinding – and enhanced staff motivation, performance and retention.

Arts and Health / Creative Ageing programs benefit all stakeholders in facilities for older people – residents, patients, staff, carers, family.

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## What is an Arts and Health Program?

An Arts and Health program provides participants with access to creative activities specifically designed to achieve positive health outcomes. Ideally, programs are delivered by professional artists trained in healthcare. Programs specifically designed to maintain health and wellbeing in older people are called 'Creative Ageing' programs.

The term 'arts' encompasses a broad spectrum of creative activities such as painting, drawing, sculpting, photography, film, music, theatre, dancing, comedy, digital media, creative writing and handcrafts such as quilting or jewellery making.

Music programs, for example, can encompass individual singing, community choirs, playing an instrument, listening to a CD, attending a concert, enrolling in the University of the Third Age to learning about aspects of music history.

Dancing programs, for example, can encompass classical ballet, contemporary movement, exercise classes to music, ballroom, tango, line, square, belly and wheelchair dancing.

Certain art forms can be utilised for specific conditions such as singing to improve cardiovascular function and breathing and dance to improve mobility and combat obesity.

Most importantly, the arts bring people together and forge essential links with the broader community.

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## The Arts are Good Fun

Aligned with the development of arts and health in Australia is the growing interest by healthcare professionals in creative pursuits

Healthcare professionals recognise that the arts are beneficial for health and wellbeing – reducing the stress of a pressured healthcare environment, assisting them to maintain mental alertness and providing respite and lifestyle balance.

The growth in medical humanities education is valuable in honing communications and observational skills and improved diagnosis procedures.



The arts are not only good for people but they are good fun too!

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## Therapeutic Outcomes from Arts and Health Programming

Research has demonstrated that arts and health / creative ageing programs can:

- reduce stress and anxiety and improve mood and self esteem
- assist with pain management
- facilitate dialogue and communication (patients / family members; patients / hospital staff)
- excite the imagination, provide distraction, entertain
- educate and inform
- provide a safe and soothing environment
- improve design features regarding patient and carer rooms, medical instrumentation and public signage and spaces
- reduce the length of time in hospital
- reduce reliance on medication and hospital staff
- enhance the wellbeing of hospital staff, carers, families



# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## **Arts and Health / Creative Ageing in Australia and Globally**

Key to the global arts and health movement is the unifying communications role played by peak arts and health organisations in the US, UK, Canada and Australia, together with improved access to information, resources and events.

Arts and Health Australia (AHA) ([www.artsandhealth.org](http://www.artsandhealth.org)) is a national advocacy and networking organisation, committed to promoting best practice policy, programming and research across acute and primary care, community health, health promotion, medical / health education and research.

Sister organisation, The Australian Centre for Creative Ageing (ACCA), founded in 2009, has been established to advocate for increased scientific research in the efficacy of arts and health programming for older Australians. ACCA is affiliated with the National Center for Creative Aging in Washington DC.

Mental health, creative ageing, social inclusion and intergenerational programs are areas of focus at the AHA annual international arts and health conference. The 2<sup>nd</sup> Art of Good Health and Wellbeing conference will be held at The Sidney Myer Asia Centre, University of Melbourne, 16 to 19 November 2010. Call for papers now open.



# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## Creative Ageing Research in the USA

**“Art is like chocolate for the brain” - Dr Gene Cohen MD PhD**

Gene was the Director, Center on Aging, Health & Humanities, Professor of Health Care Sciences & Professor of Psychiatry & Behavioral Sciences, George Washington University ([www.gwumc.edu/cahh](http://www.gwumc.edu/cahh)). Author of *The Creative Age* (2000) and *The Mature Mind* (2006)

Dr Cohen led the first multi-site longitudinal study on the impact of professionally conducted, participatory cultural programs on older adults, supported by the National Endowment for the Arts' Office for AccessAbility ([www.nea.gov](http://www.nea.gov))

Susan Perlstein, Founder of Elders Share the Arts, New York, was the project manager on the study.

Susan also founded the National Center for Creative Aging (NCCA) and is currently Director of Training and Education. ([www.creativeaging.org](http://www.creativeaging.org))



# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## **Creativity and Aging Study:**

### **The Impact of Professionally Conducted Cultural Programs on Older Adults**

Dr Cohen completed this landmark study on the impact of professionally conducted, participatory cultural programs on older adults, 2001 – 2005, across 3 sites in Washington DC, New York City and San Francisco, with 300 people participants.

Average age of participants was 80, with an age range of 65 – 103 years

Impressive results for participants in the intervention group:

1. maintained greater independence
2. higher morale
3. less loneliness
4. less medication than control group
5. expanded outlook - interests and activities
6. greater sense of control
7. higher social engagement



# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## Quality of Life Research

Dr Cheryl Dileo, PhD, MT-BC. Professor of Music Therapy and Coordinator of the MMT Program and Director: Arts and Quality of Life Research Center Temple University, Philadelphia, is a leading researcher in arts and health in the US and is an honorary faculty member of the University of Melbourne.

Her department is undertaking 7 Cochrane Reviews into arts and health, exploring:

- Are the arts effective modalities in healthcare?
- Do the arts make a difference?
- How do the arts make a difference?
- Why do the arts make a difference?
- What is the best evidence?
- What kind(s) of evidence is(are) needed?



[www.temple.edu/boyer/researchcenter](http://www.temple.edu/boyer/researchcenter)

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## Arts and Health in the UK – Leaders in the Field

The UK has been successful in implementing arts and health at a regional and community level through its arts councils and national health services. [www.artscouncil.org.uk](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk)

Mike White M.A., M.Phil., Senior Research and Development a Fellow in Arts and Health, Centre for Medical Humanities, University of Durham ([www.dur.ac.uk](http://www.dur.ac.uk)) and Senior Research Fellow, St Chad's College, Durham UK.



A high profile project led by Mike White is the international renowned Antony Gormley sculpture Angel of the North in Newcastle Gateshead. (1998)

Mike White is the author of *Arts Development in Community Health: A Social Tonic* (Radcliffe, Oxford 2009)

Mike is giving a presentation at the National Gallery of Victoria on Thursday 26 August 2010 at 6pm and will be a keynote speaker at the AHA conference, November 2010.



# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

Mary Robson is an artist, social educator and arts/health consultant. Her abiding interests in people and shared experience mean that she uses the arts and creativity to make connections and create networks, help expose choices and latent talents, encourage mutual understanding, enhance the quality of communication and encourage thinking, learning and reflection.

Mary develop events such as lantern processions, carnivals and workshops with individuals and communities, to nurture cultural change.

Mary is the Associate for Arts in Health and Education at the Centre for Medical Humanities, University of Durham, UK. Along with Mike White, she has developed *Common Knowledge*, a series of workforce development programs bringing together those working in health, the arts, education and the voluntary sector. ([www.dur.ac.uk](http://www.dur.ac.uk))



Alice Thwaite – Director, Equal Arts, Gateshead Tyne & Wear UK

Key Project: The Knitted Lives ([www.equalarts.org.uk](http://www.equalarts.org.uk))

Inspired by The Knitting Room, Uniting Aged Care Project, Tasmania

Developed by Robyn Carney <http://www.uacvt.org>

Key Resource: Artfully Ageing, Baring Report, UK – overview of creative ageing programs in the UK

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

Alison Jones is a highly regarded arts in healthcare practitioner in the UK – founder of the Looking Well Healthy Living Centre, Bentham, North Yorkshire – [www.pioneerprojects.org.uk](http://www.pioneerprojects.org.uk)  
Alison was awarded a residency by Healthway WA in 2008, following Mike White's tenure in 2007.



Another key authority in the UK is Clive Parkinson, Director, Arts for Health, Manchester Metropolitan University [www.artsforhealth.org](http://www.artsforhealth.org) and Project Leader of MMU's Invest to Save: Arts in Health Programme. [www.mmu.ac.uk/miriad/investtosave](http://www.mmu.ac.uk/miriad/investtosave)



Groundbreaking research - *A Study of the Effect of Visual and Performing Arts in Health Care* - was conducted by Dr Rosalia Lelchuk Staricoff between 1999 and 2002 to measure psychological, physiological and biological outcomes of clinical significance at Chelsea and Westminster Hospital, London. [www.hospitalarts.co.uk](http://www.hospitalarts.co.uk)

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## Arts and Health / Creative Ageing Research in Australia

Following in the footsteps of the US and the UK, Australia is recognising the importance of scientific research and an evaluation process to validate medically the use of the arts in healthcare.

Arts and Health Australia is a partner organisation in two research projects in 2010:

- *Music for Life - a Singing Workshop for Seniors* – outreach program conducted by Musica Viva.
- Art and Dementia outreach program conducted by National Gallery of Australia, Canberra.

The Australian Centre for Creative Ageing is exploring partnerships to replicate the Creative and Aging Study in Australia.

The level of arts and health activity in countries varies according to the development and integration of government policy, programming, research, education and communications.

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

A major initiative in the visual arts and healthcare in Australia is the Cunningham Dax Collection - consisting of over 12,000 creative works on paper, paintings, ceramics and textiles, created by people who have experienced mental illness or psychological trauma. The Collection is dedicated to the conservation and ethical exhibition of these works and the use of art in public mental health education.

[www.daxcollection.org.au](http://www.daxcollection.org.au)

In the USA, the Meet Me at MoMA Alzheimer's Program and the National Gallery of Australia's Art and Dementia program are outstanding models of arts and health programs in the galleries/museum sector - bringing people with Alzheimer's and other forms of dementia, along with their carers, to each museum for interactive tours of masterpieces from their collections. MoMA and the NGA exchange research data and program concepts.





# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## **Arts and Health Australia Program: Village Voices**

### **A Music Project for Residents in a National Group of Retirement Villages**

Studies in the UK, USA and Australia have been undertaken to verify the social, emotional, physical and spiritual benefits associated with active participation in choral singing including the release of pain-relieving endorphins; improved wellbeing and mood, relaxation and stress reduction.

Music is a cost-effective and non-intrusive means of improving people's physical and psychological health, self-esteem, communication, social interaction and community participation. It can also potentially result in less reliance on health care and a reduction in the factors leading to long term care.

Common themes expressed by participants include the value of meeting new people, feeling more positive, increased control over breathing, feeling more alert, feeling spiritually uplifted.

In relation to physical benefits, improvements have been noted in lung function, circulation, breathing and posture; the release of improved cardiovascular capability and reduced blood pressure; improved immune system.

Specifically for this audience, an arts and health program assists older people to make the emotional transition to retirement village life and is appealing and reassuring for family members in their role as secondary influencers. It also counters one of the barriers to moving – perceived reduction of lifestyle.

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## **Arts and Health Australia Program: Village Voices**

### **A Music Project for Residents in a National Group of Retirement Villages**

#### The Process:

A selection of music is developed in consultation with village residents. At the end of a set period, village choirs will come together for a combined concert. Planned compilation of a Village Voices CD for family member gifts and corporate marketing.

A professional choir director has been appointed to co-ordinate a national choral program across the participating villages and a professional singing leader has been appointed for each choir.

The participants do stretching and flexibility exercises to warm up their bodies, as well as breathing and vocal exercises prior to rehearsal.

Choir members contribute a small upfront fee for each group of sessions (8 week) and receive a Village Voice shirt to engender a sense of team work and pride in communal achievement.

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## **Arts and Health Australia Program: Rainbow Club Tackling Loneliness and Fostering Social Inclusion in Retirement Villages**

According to research by UniSA, there are four different patterns in the way that loneliness is understood and perceived by older people and service providers.

1. Loneliness is a private and personal experience that older people don't want others to know about because they see it as a sign of failure or weakness
2. Loneliness is influenced by a sense of belonging or feeling connected to networks, friends and the wider community
3. Loneliness is related to a person's ability to maintain quality relationships, especially with family members
4. Loneliness is related to time, in particular, night time. During the day older people often enjoy outings such as shopping, lunches and different events, but at night they feel lonely because they have no one to go home to and nothing to do.

Just because older people are single and live alone doesn't mean that they are lonely. Older people can experience loneliness within a marriage and some people in independent living units experience loneliness despite being surrounded by other people.

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## **Arts and Health Australia Program: Rainbow Club Tackling Loneliness and Fostering Social Inclusion in Retirement Villages**

For residents in a retirement village, loneliness can often be associated with readjustment. Leaving the family home. Moving away from friends and family. Experiencing the loss of a life partner or neighbour. Needing time and support to grieve and regain a sense of purpose in life. Readjusting to their health and mobility. Making new friendships. Trying new things to keep active. Relearning old skills. Taking up new learning opportunities.

The UniSA study found that older people see themselves as quite active. They love volunteering and are very interested in interacting with other people, in travelling, and doing lots of things, especially things that have purpose and meaning in their life. They are a very creative, heterogeneous group, and are good at spotting lonely people.”

(Reference: UniSA Postdoctoral Research Associate, Dr Katrina Jaworski)

The conclusion can be drawn that socially active residents can be a powerful tool to promote social inclusion in their own community, drawing out more isolated and lonely residents to participate in the life of the village – while also remaining respectful of people’s privacy.

# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

## Business Case for a Creative Ageing Strategy

1. Improved quality of life for residents through greater vibrancy in the villages
2. Improved health benefits for residents through increased socialisation and engagement in creative activities that promote mental agility and physical fitness
3. Additional staff support, impacting on performance and morale
4. Marketing opportunities that provide a distinct point of difference , facilitating relationships with potential residents, encouraging goodwill amongst existing residents and creating promotional opportunities in the media.  
eg Melbourne actor and playwright Alan Hopgood gave presentations on healthy ageing and his Health Plays at Aevum Living retirement village Open Days on the NSW Mid North Coast in January 2010



# ARTS AND HEALTH AUSTRALIA

Healthy People, Healthy Communities – engaging with the Arts

**“It might be the purgative power of watching a great tragedy, the soothing effect of a fine painting or even the robust exercise of singing in a choir, but the arts are good for your health”**

Richard Smith, Editor  
British Medical Journal

*New Scientist*

June 2002

Margret Meagher  
Arts and Health Australia &  
The Australian Centre for  
Creative Ageing

[www.artsandhealth.org](http://www.artsandhealth.org)

[margret@artsandhealth.org](mailto:margret@artsandhealth.org)

