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Australian Disaster
Resilience Conference



Creativity, recovery, and resilience: Creative processes that empower individuals and communities to participate in their recovery

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CONFERENCE AND EXHIBITION

22-25 AUGUST 2023

Brisbane Convention and
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“[...] having these art classes, I think they just saved me. **Saved my mental health.**”

- Pauline, Lobethal SA, 2023

What is creative recovery?

"Whilst every Creative Recovery project is unique, they can be loosely characterised as **community-led arts-based programs** where a creative practitioner(s) works collaboratively with community members, local organisations and service providers to create **supportive, participatory outcomes** for those living in disaster environments."

- Creative Recovery Network, 2023



Strathewen arts recovery projects after
2009 Black Saturday bushfires VIC

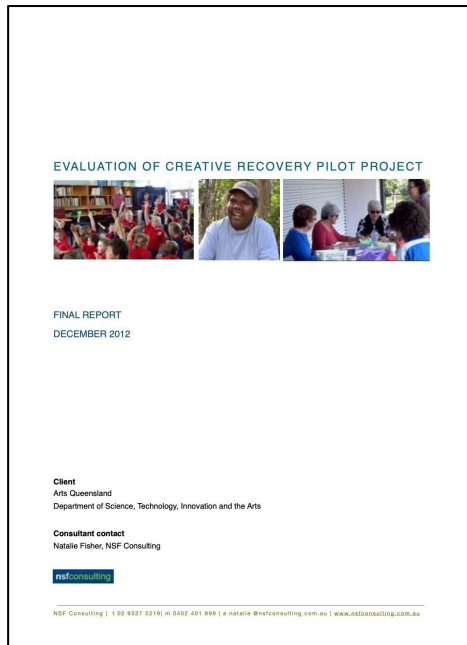
Images: Left *The Chook Project* (Barbara Joyce);
Right *The Letterbox Project* (Marion Oakley).



More Strathewen arts recovery projects after
2009 Black Saturday bushfires VIC

Images: Left *Strathewen Bushfire Memorial* (Urban Initiatives/Arterial Design); Right *The Blacksmiths' Tree* branch by Doug Tarrant (Amanda Grant and The Blacksmiths' Association VIC).

Creative Recovery Pilot Project following 2010/11 QLD floods and Cyclone Yasi



Images: Left *Evaluation of Pilot Project* by NSF Consulting (2012); Centre *Pilot Project Final Report* by Creative Recovery Arts Corps/Contact Inc. (2013); Right *Creative Recovery Network* logo.

Post-Black Summer creativity in Beechmont QLD



Images: Left local artist Dave Groom's artwork for exhibition and publication, *Fire and Endless Falls*; Right one of four murals in Beechmont. Photography by Scott Chrisman. Supplied with permission by Jessica Brown.

Post-Black Summer creativity in Snowy Valleys NSW

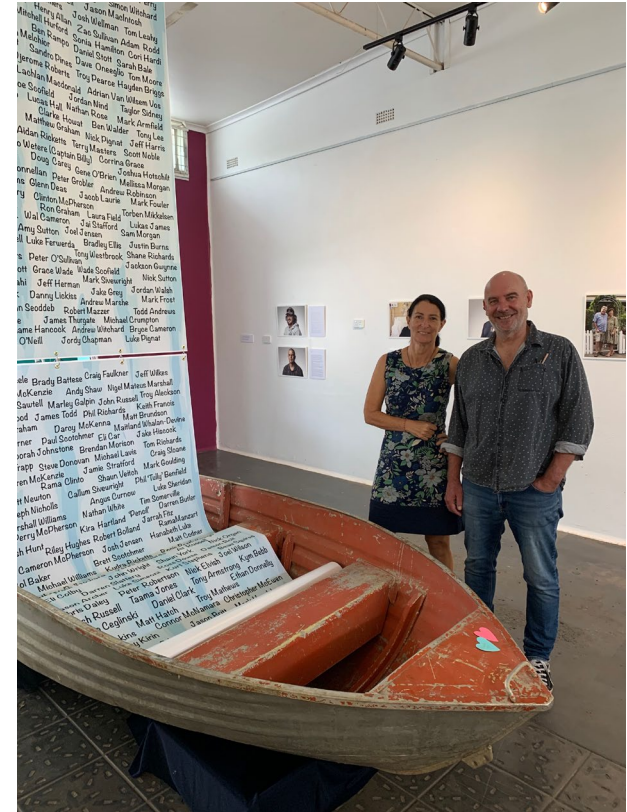


Images: Left *Arbour* finale concert, photography by Matt Beaver; Centre *Flying Fruit Fly Circus*, photography by Matt Beaver; Right canvases by Julia Roche, photography by Vanessa Keenan.



Creative First Aid Alliance work continues in Northern Rivers following 2022 floods NSW

Images: Left: Northern Rivers community at Rescue exhibition. Right: lead artist Jeanti St Clair and Lismore community member at Rescue exhibition 2023. Supplied with permission by Jeanti St Clair.



Best practice in creative recovery

- Community led
- Usually facilitated by professional artists and arts workers
- Aim to be inclusive, participatory and collaborative
- Traverse a range of art forms (performing, visual, written, etc.)
- Funded by government, arts and/or recovery agencies, as well as health and other related organisations
- Strengthened by cross-sector and intergovernmental partnerships
- Include in-person gatherings, such as workshops and community events, often over a period of months or years



See *Impacts of Creative Recovery* report (Creative Recovery Network and Foundation for Rural Regional Renewal, 2022) for more information.

Psychosocial benefits

- Helping communities build and restore connections
- Creating lasting physical or visual memorials
- Sharing personal stories, which assists healing
- Contributing to a culture of generosity or 'giving'
- Enhancing psychological and physiological health
- Offering opportunities for respite, pleasure and play
- Providing a sense of routine for participants

- NSF Consulting, 2011, pp. 42-43



See *The Role of the Arts in Rebuilding Communities* (NSF Consulting, 2011) for more information.

What is my research adding?

- Bringing together **academic literature** and **industry reports** from arts & cultural and emergency management sectors
- **15+ interviews** with creative recovery facilitators throughout Australia to understand how they approach the work and associated challenges
- **5+ focus groups** with community participants in creative recovery projects to understand the benefits according to community members
- **3+ project observations** to understand on-the-ground processes
- **Sharing findings** via peer-reviewed journals and research translation across disciplines, as well as for the general public

Cardinia Shire Case Study



Image: Creative Recovery Facilitators Janine Good, Gülsen Özer, and Sue Jarvis with Corten steel sculptures. Supplied with permission by Gülsen Özer.

A *Singing Thing* and Corten sculptures



Image: Left A *Singing Thing* choir rehearsal; Right Corten sculpture at Cannibal Creek Nature Trail. Supplied with permission by Gülsen Özer.

Adelaide Hills Case Study



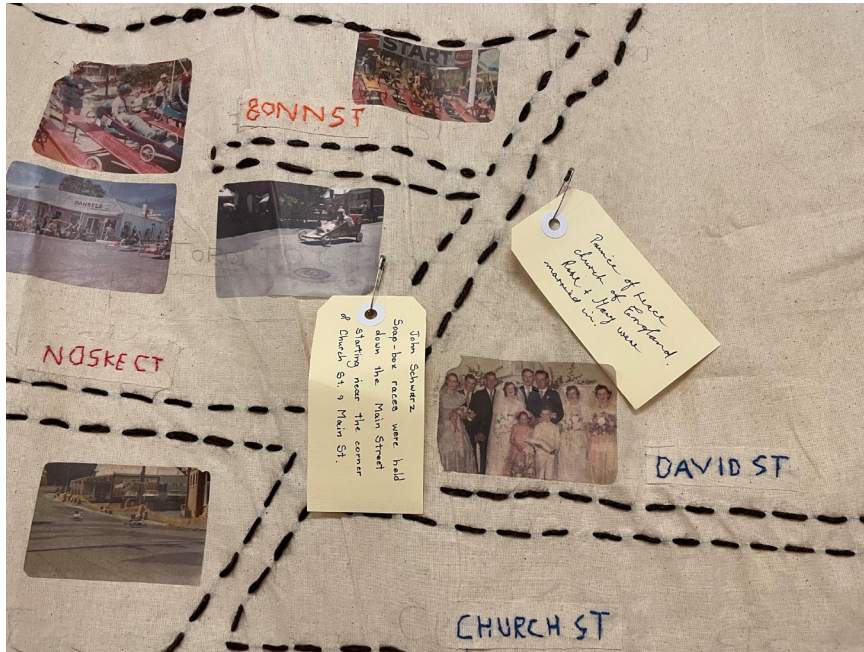
Image: Community members attend *Understorey* performance by Louise Flaherty, Belinda Gehlert and Tanya Voges 2023. Supplied with permission by Melinda Rankin.

Exhibitions, workshops and public events



Images: Left *Regenerate Exhibition* community members with their artworks; Right kids' guitars with artist Deb Twining for Strum and Stroll 2021, courtesy of Adelaide Guitar Festival. Supplied with permission by Melinda Rankin.

'Head, heart and hands stuff'



Images: Mapping activity for *Hidden Treasures* project with artist Clare Wildish 2021.
Supplied with permission by Melinda Rankin.



Image: A Singing Thing choir rehearsing in Tonimbuk Hall. Supplied with permission by Gülşen Özer.

“The Singing Thing [...] drew out emotion in people [...] that you just didn't know was in there. And you wouldn't have taken the opportunity to do that any other way either, sitting around having a beer with someone, it just didn't come out the way it did under those conditions.”

– Danny, Tonimbuk VIC, 2023

‘A vehicle for connection’



“[...] the connections turned out to be **more important than anything else** [to help us] get through the trauma that we’d faced.”

– Sue, Tonimbuk VIC, 2023

‘One day, you’ll have a wall to put it on’

“It was probably the first of those activities that kind of had that **message of hope** or that **message of moving on** [...]”

– Nell, Lobethal SA, 2023



Image: Mother and son participating in New Art for New Walls workshop. Supplied with permission by Melinda Rankin

“[...] without the arts projects, I **wouldn't have had access to any of those people.** [...] **There wasn't any other group that I can think of outside of Fabrik and the arts that brought us together.**”

– Ngari, Lobethal SA, 2023

'The longest staying process'



Image: *Understorey* performance, Tanya Voges dancing 2023. Supplied with permission by Melinda Rankin.

“I have to say initially, when [the artists] said what they were going to do, **I thought, you're crazy.** Because it was kind of a case of, hang on a minute, there's other things that we need, **do we really need to sing together?** [...] **But I'm here to say it was amazing.** All of the functions, all of the events that I was involved in were really good.”

– Sue, Tonimbuk VIC, 2023

Preliminary findings from focus groups: What communities value about creative recovery

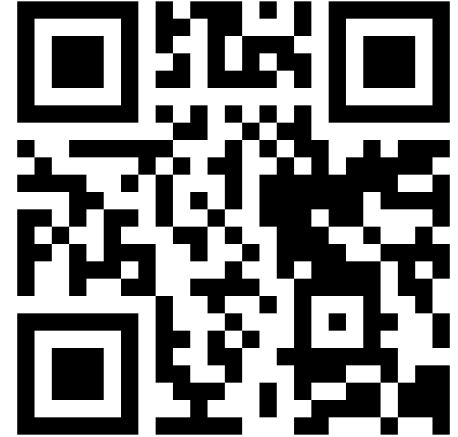
- Regular access to **safe environments for emotional expression**
- **Being around others** who have experienced the same thing
- A process that **strengthens bonds** within families, groups and community
- A source of **pride and hope**
- An avenue for **identifying personal recovery needs**, such as processing difficult emotions
- Options for **continued local participation in the arts**
- **Long-term presence and responsiveness of artists and arts workers** to community needs and interests

What can you do with this information?

- Keep an open mind!
- Be flexible with timelines and funding arrangements for arts projects, but be clear about budgetary limitations or constraints
- Involve artists and arts organisations in recovery planning before disasters
- Partner with artists and arts organisations to deliver programs
- Consider writing creative recovery into your recovery plans

Research outcomes

- PhD Thesis due early 2025
- Book chapter linking creative recovery and democracy
- Academic journal articles
- News media articles and other public advocacy
- Presentations and briefings across sectors
- Use the QR code to subscribe for updates



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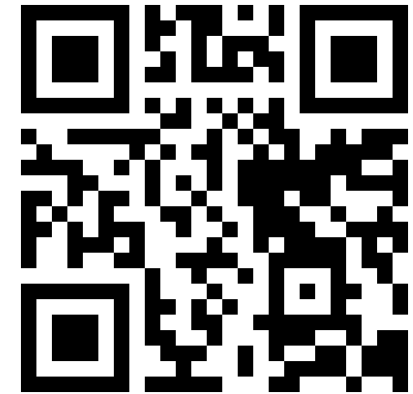


Thank you!

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