



Innovation,
Applicability and
Transferability

Research Update/Outcome

Researching the option of an Artist in Residence / Community Arts Project

There are many creative art activities conducted across Resthaven's community and residential aged care services. A project was conducted in 2014-15 to understand the value to older people of art programs, and to develop a framework for an Artist in Residence program.

A literature review identified a number of research articles about the positive impact of creative arts led by professional artists on the health and wellbeing of older people. This included reducing levels of stress, anxiety and depression. A significant outcome is the sense of mastery of new skills, which increases an individual's level of empowerment and self-confidence. Additional outcomes include greater social interaction and connection.

To inform the development of an Artist in Residence Framework, a trial was conducted at Resthaven's Marion site, where community and residential services are co-located.



This included developing the project brief, selecting a suitable Artist, promoting the concept and conducting the project.

The chosen artist, Connie Giacoumis, provided great leadership in developing an artistic concept with the customer group, guiding the group through all parts of the development of the final art pieces: pattern design, cutting handmade tiles, painting, and installation. All project participants: residents, clients, carers, staff and volunteers, played an equal role in developing the art, no matter what their prior experience or skill level.



The final artwork, four ceramic panels depicting the “Ever Changing Seasons of Life”, a collaborative art piece proudly produced by the group and owned by Resthaven, was displayed as a mobile exhibition before permanent installation at Resthaven Marion. A photograph of the finished piece was used for corporate Christmas and everyday use cards.



Outcomes

An evaluation of the time-limited project indicated that all participants were highly satisfied with their involvement, the artist and the final artwork.

Observations during the project confirmed the notion of mastery of new skills and its influence in self-esteem and confidence.



It became apparent that the project being conducted was actually a Collaborative Community Art Project, rather than an Artist in Residence program. The main difference is that a Collaborative Community Art Project involves a number of people in developing the concept and completing the artwork. With an Artist in Residence program, the organisation provides the space, time and community access for an Artist in Residence to develop their own work while others observe and learn.

There were some benefits in identifying the difference between these two creative arts initiatives. Frameworks were developed for both an Artist in Residence program and a Collaborative Community Art Project.

All participants expressed a great sense of achievement, pride and ownership of the final product, now installed in the sensory garden at Resthaven Marion, for all to enjoy.

‘The Ever Changing Seasons of Life’

A collaborative community art project led by Artist in Residence, Connie Giacoumis pictured below, with volunteer participants.