



THE ROLE OF THE ARTS IN REBUILDING COMMUNITY



AN EVALUATION OF ARTS VICTORIA'S AND REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA'S BUSHFIRE INITIATIVES

FINAL REPORT

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Client

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1. Executive Summary

The 2009 Victorian bushfires were the worst in Australia's history. While disaster and emergency relief services were activated immediately, the task of responding to a tragedy of this scale was unprecedented and challenging.

The Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund ('the Fund') was an immediate response to the need for small arts projects during the early recovery phase after the Victorian bushfires. With a total budget of \$100,000, the Fund comprised small grants for artists to work in their communities on projects that contributed to the recovery effort. In addition, an Arts Recovery Project Officer role was created to facilitate projects in a practical way and supplement community capacity which was severely diminished in the aftermath of the bushfires, particularly in the intensely affected Murrindindi Shire region.

Objectives of the evaluation

NSF Consulting was commissioned by Arts Victoria to evaluate the Quick Response Fund and the role of the Arts Recovery Project Officer. The objectives of the evaluation were to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives, determine the impacts of the initiatives for bushfire-affected communities, and to explore whether arts-based projects make a particular contribution to community-rebuilding in a post-disaster environment.

Findings of the evaluation

The Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund was a targeted program that helped to galvanise community support and unity.

The evaluation found that the combination of the small grant funding and the support role of the Arts Recovery Project Officer was a successful post-disaster model of support. The

importance of the role of the Project Officer working one-on-one with community members was invaluable, as was the value of showing interest in each and every funded project within the area the Project Officer was working.

This evaluation has shown that providing support for artists and communities following a disaster is about providing immediate support.

Through the initiatives it is clear that the arts has performed an important role in rebuilding bushfire-affected communities, similarly to other more tangible infrastructure projects. The arts can be a powerful medium that allows people to express what is inexpressible in words. The projects created a 'caring community'. They provided art as a healer, increased people's self confidence, contributed to new communities, brought order to people's lives, created living memorials to the bushfires, and allowed people to give to others.

The initiatives addressed all of the essential principles of implementation of community rebuilding in disaster recovery to varying degrees. These included demonstrating good governance, provision of on-the-ground support and the speed and simplicity of the grant.

The Fund plus its associated support of the work of the Project Officer has had far reaching outcomes for individuals and their communities. It has been an excellent example of return on investment of public funds.

The findings from this evaluation contribute to evidence-based research into the effectiveness of specific arts-based programs in disaster recovery. The Victorian government is in a position to take a leadership role by communicating the learnings and important findings.

How the initiatives' objectives were met

The initiatives supported local artists to work within their communities on arts recovery projects. The full benefits of the Fund were made possible by the complementary work of the Project Officer in the Murrindindi Shire. The Project Officer was seen to fundamentally improve and increase the delivery of arts projects in that area, to help artists feel more supported and connected—and in many cases to enable projects to grow or continue.

The initiatives assisted in the recovery process through cultural activity to galvanise, unite and heal. There is growing evidence in current literature that the arts plays an important role in disaster recovery. The initiatives confirmed this by contributing to personal healing, building confidence, creating memorials, building new communities, bringing new order where everything else signified disorder, and allowing people to give. Most projects were reliant on the in-kind support offered by others, in a range of forms, whether it be formally or informally. Many projects raised money for bushfire recovery initiatives. Just less than a third (32 per cent) of income for all projects came from artists' personal contribution, which was higher than the contribution of the Fund (26 per cent). This demonstrates the drive and personal commitment that grant recipients dedicated to their projects and the importance of giving in disaster recovery work.

The initiatives provided accessible, appropriately scaled and responsive arts grants for bushfire affected areas. The small scale of the grants was appropriate. The process was simple, turnaround was fast and projects could start immediately. The modest funding of up to \$2,500 was manageable and enabled artists to take risks. It did not introduce a burden of extensive project planning associated with a

larger sum of money, particularly since most grant recipients had never applied for funding before.

Appropriateness of the Initiatives

The modeling for the initiatives was appropriate, particularly the combination of the individual grants and the work of the Project Officer, where projects were supported in Murrindindi. The scale of the funding was appropriate, particularly since the money was offered very quickly. However, the overall budget underestimated the level of interest in the grants, as half of the applicants were unsuccessful. The success rate of applicants was higher in Murrindindi, where the Project Officer worked, than in other parts of Victoria, which suggests that the support and assistance of the the Officer was significant in realising projects. The application process was perceived by some as inappropriate and arduous, given the modest size of the grant and the level of detail required of applicants who were sometimes in a fragile emotional state. However, it was appropriate that the process had these systems in place to provide accountability.

The importance and appropriateness of the initiatives were endorsed by the views of bushfire recovery managers at Red Cross, Centacare, Salvation Army and Berry Street, as well as by the Victorian Emergency Services Commissioner and the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority. The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal recently set up a funding scheme specifically for arts projects to help with community rebuilding. This was in direct response to benefits that the Foundation saw from the initiatives in the bushfire-affected areas.

Effectiveness of the Initiatives

The initiatives were effective in addressing their stated objectives, and illustrated that the Victorian government responded to the impact of the bushfires in a way that has been seen to renew and benefit communities by protecting and promoting their well being.

A number of unintended positive consequences occurred, including some projects attracting additional funding, in-kind support, or media attention. Some projects grew or extended beyond their initial vision, some attracted greater numbers of participants and audiences than anticipated, participants experienced personal growth, and money was raised for bushfire recovery activities.

Key drivers of success

The literature review identified a number of elements that are crucial to the success of disaster recovery projects. The initiatives contained all of these, as well as some additional successful elements. They were:

- ▶ The speed and simplicity of the grant;
- ▶ Provision of on-the-ground support;
- ▶ The initiatives were community-driven;
- ▶ The inclusiveness of the projects;
- ▶ Utilisation of existing groups and networks;
- ▶ Recognition that people recover at different rates;
- ▶ Acknowledgement that strong communities are diverse;
- ▶ Opportunities to share stories;
- ▶ Providing opportunities for reflection and commemoration and a reason for people to come together;

- ▶ Providing research feedback loops to monitor progress; and
- ▶ The timing and circumstances of the disaster that created a unifying purpose.

Issues and learnings

There were some minor issues relating to delivery of the initiatives, however these did not impinge on the success of the projects or their intended outcomes. The main issues were:

- ▶ The application process was arduous for some, particularly those who had not applied for funding before, but also for one or two experienced grant application writers;
- ▶ The Fund did not allow artists to reapply for another grant to enable their project to grow or continue;
- ▶ The budget for the Fund did not support the considerable numbers of prospective projects, many of which were ready to commence after the program had ended;
- ▶ Some artists in areas other than Murrindindi Shire were disappointed to have not had a personal visit from someone representing the funding body;
- ▶ The work of the Project Officer was made difficult in Murrindindi Shire as there was no obvious Council contact with whom to form a partnership, and the workload was arguably too great for one person.

The value of the arts in disaster recovery

There is a growing body of evidence that the arts plays a valuable role in disaster recovery. This was supported in the evaluation.

The literature states that it is not appropriate to talk about 'best practice' in arts-based disaster recovery responses. This is because every

disaster situation is different and requires a tailored response, and arts-based disaster recovery is a relatively new field with little experience to draw on. Instead, it is more helpful to consider the range of ways in which the arts can help rebuild communities, namely:

Building and rebuilding communities. The arts help people to create new connections when old ones have been severed. Examples included:

- ▶ Nangara Reserve Project, which brought previously dislocated Indigenous communities back to the area to work with existing non-Indigenous communities, forging renewed and new relationships;
- ▶ Strathewen Letterbox Project, in which the participant group grew beyond locals to include 50 people from the wider region (more information in case study on p23);
- ▶ Steel Pan Band in Marysville, which attracted participants beyond the local area, continues to grow 18 months after it began, rehearses weekly and has been playing gigs around the state (more information in case study on p28);
- ▶ The Tree Project, which brought together a new group of blacksmiths and raised the profile of their craft by attracting contributions from over 3,000 people including local and international blacksmiths.

Creating memorials. A number of projects provided an artwork that served as a place to commemorate and remember. Projects included Art From The Extended Region in Kyneton, made from donated community china; Nangara Reserve Attraction; and Community History Mural project in Rawson.

Sharing stories. A number of projects gave participants an opportunity to share stories in a

group, in their own time. Project examples included the Strathewen Letterbox Project; the Blessings exhibition in Kinglake; Getting Back To the Studio ceramics class in Cottles Bridge; Post Black Saturday Arts Renewal Project in Buxton; and Touched by Fire project- a film recording of personal stories of the community from across the state.

Allowing people to give. Many funded projects involved in-kind support by community members. The relatively high level of personal financial contribution to project demonstrates the value artists gave to their projects and being able to help people in their communities.

Improving health outcomes. A number of funded projects were participatory and involved meeting on a regular basis at a neutral place to do something creative. The comfort that many participants received from this was seen to improve their psychological and emotional state, at least in the short term.

Bringing order from disorder. For many projects that required participants to meet regularly, the routine established was seen to bring order back into their lives, when everything else signified disorder during the aftermath of the bushfires.

Recommendations

Recommendations have been made on two levels; firstly what would be useful in the current environment— that being at the conclusion of the life of the initiatives; and secondly for government, should there be a need to respond to another disaster like the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

The current environment

Recommendation 1. Continue role of a Project Officer beyond June 2011 because the support offered through this role was more valuable to

many grant recipients than the money provided through the Fund. Additionally, some artists are only now ready to come forward to commence their projects.

Recommendation 2. Provide ongoing financial support, either from the government or non-government sector. Government may consider implementing a mid-term support mechanism for people just starting to scope their projects two to three years after the bushfires.

A government arts response to another disaster recovery situation

Recommendation 3. Consider a simplified application process because of the level of anxiety and trauma that some grant recipients were experiencing at the time of their application.

Recommendation 4. Model future responses on key success factors that aid capacity building and resilience. Any future government response to a disaster like the 2009 Victorian bushfires should be modelled in this exemplary approach to disaster recovery.

Recommendation 5. Emphasise the importance of positioning the arts into government cross-sector processes and programs, including formally recognising the role of the arts in disaster recovery. The model of seconded arts staff within Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority (VBRRA) should be recommended for future scenarios.

Recommendation 6. Promote findings from this evaluation with government and service providers throughout Australia and the world. Capitalise on the endorsement of the Emergency Services Commissioner and service providers interviewed for this evaluation. Prepare a Communications Strategy to outline how government can use the findings from this

evaluation to inform future planning and processes.

Recommendation 7. Plan for government's capacity to respond to disasters by regularly revisiting the guiding principles outlined in Disaster Protocols of government and non-government bodies.

Recommendation 8. Conduct longitudinal evaluation studies with these artists and their communities to investigate the value of the arts in long term disaster recovery.

Recommendation 9. Incorporate critical success factors in future models of disaster recovery, particularly the use of small grants available to as many people as possible, with a quick turnaround and on-the-ground support.

2. Introduction

2.1 Background and context

The 2009 Victorian bushfires were the worst in Australia's history. The fires devastated nearly 80 communities across the state, destroyed more than 2,000 homes and damaged around 430,000 hectares of land. By the time the fires were contained, 173 people had lost their lives and many others were seriously injured. While disaster and emergency relief services were activated immediately, the task of responding to a tragedy of this scale was unprecedented and challenging.

Following the bushfires, the Victorian Government responded by delivering services in these affected areas and created a new body—the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority. The Authority included representatives from a range of agencies and departments, including Arts Victoria. In addition, existing agencies considered how they could contribute to the recovery process.

The arts sector mobilised quickly in response to the 2009 Victorian bushfires. The major cultural institutions, peak bodies, non-government organisations and individuals offered a range of supports and services to assist impacted communities with recovery. The Victorian Government's Quick Response Fund and Arts Recovery Project Officer were a key part of this broader effort by the arts sector.

Arts Victoria

Arts Victoria is a state-government organisation that provides a range of programs to assist in the development and presentation of cultural projects and services which benefit the Victorian arts industry and the wider community. The organisation administers funding programs that provide services and support to the Victorian

sector through projects, annual and multi-year funding arrangements.

Regional Arts Victoria

Regional Arts Victoria is the state's peak non-government organisation for the arts in regional and rural Victoria. The non-government organisation manages a range of programs and initiatives to celebrate the arts.

Together with Arts Victoria, Regional Arts Victoria supported two key initiatives as part of the government's contribution to the re-building and recovery efforts in communities affected by the Victorian bushfires of February 2009; the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund and the Arts Recovery Project Officer.

Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority

On 10 February 2009 the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments established the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority to oversee and coordinate the largest recovery and rebuilding program Victoria has ever faced.

The Authority works with communities, businesses, charities, local councils and other government departments to help rebuild communities affected by the bushfires.

The Authority is scheduled to close in mid 2011. Some of the services provided from the time of the fires have already ceased, while others—such as Rebuilding Advisors—will continue well past mid 2011.

Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal

The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal is a philanthropic organisation, formed in 2000 and based in Bendigo. It provides an opportunity for business, philanthropy, government and the community to work

together to improve regional, rural and remote communities' capacity to respond positively to the challenges facing rural Australia. It does this by raising and distributing money to communities across the nation to support projects that stimulate the renewal of whole communities.

Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund

The Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund was established on 8 February 2009 by the Victorian Government in partnership with the Federal Government and Australian Red Cross. It was created to support individuals, towns and suburbs affected by the 2009 bushfires.

In the 18 months since the bushfires more than \$391 million has been provided to the Appeal Fund. All money raised is used to support individuals and communities affected by the bushfires.

Local government arts and cultural management in Victoria

Local councils across Victoria approach the integration of arts and culture into policy and planning in different ways.

There are a number of councils throughout Victoria that have a strong arts culture. These councils tend to have dedicated arts or cultural officers with strong teams and they work closely with other sections of the council to integrate arts and cultural activities into the delivery of other services. Many of them also have strong links with other cultural alliances across the state and their team leaders often sit on arts and cultural advisory committees. The councils with strong arts and culture policies also tend to work closely with Regional Arts Development Officers either in their own local government area or in a nearby region, as well as with

Regional Arts Victoria, with referrals of individuals or groups to funding opportunities.

A number of these councils have been using art for healing in their community development services for a number of years and are advocates of using the arts to help with other community development projects.

Since the 2009 Victorian bushfires this approach has continued, although it is not clear that it increased significantly; these councils just kept doing what they have been doing in recent years— using the arts in community development projects.



Some of 30 installations as part of City of Greater Bendigo's *Colour the Gully* project following the 2009 bushfires.

2.2 Overview of the Initiatives

1. Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund

The Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund ('the Fund') was initiated by the Victorian Government through Arts Victoria in response to the need for small arts projects during the early recovery phase of bushfire-affected communities. Grants of up to \$2,500 were made available to support local artists to work in their communities on projects that would contribute to the recovery effort.

The program was funded by Arts Victoria. It was initiated in response to the expressed need for people in bushfire-affected communities in regional Victoria to deliver small, locally relevant arts and cultural projects during the early recovery phase.

The Fund sought to meet the needs over the 12 months following the fires of February 2009 that other arts funding programs could not due to timelines and other eligibility requirements. It did not seek to cover all arts-related projects for bushfire-affected areas but rather to inject funds into many that may not otherwise have support, or to seed a project.

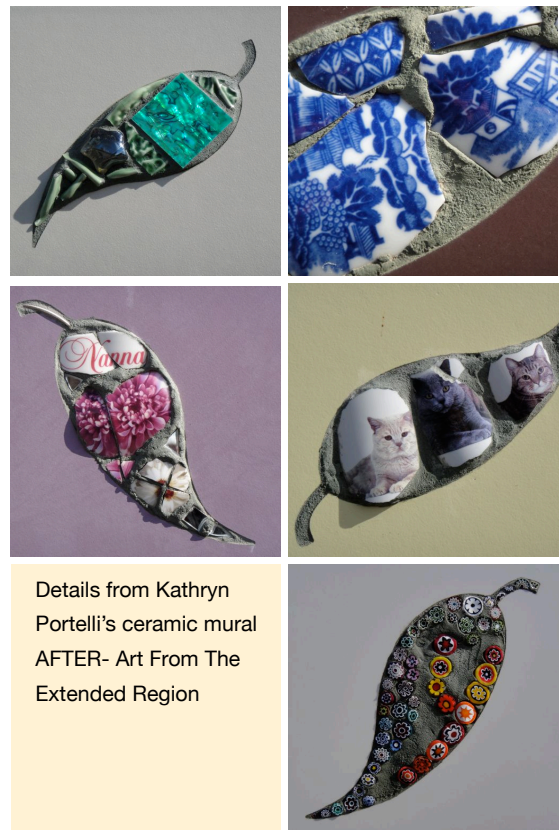
Aims of the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund

The main objectives of the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund were to:

1. Support local artists to work within their communities on arts recovery projects;
2. Assist the recovery process through the use of cultural activity to galvanise, unite and heal; and
3. Prompt economic activity through local projects and events.

Through these objectives, the Quick Response Fund sought to:

1. Support local artists across all art forms from fire-affected communities on arts projects that contribute to the recovery effort;
2. Support small-scale projects and short-term events;
3. Support pilot projects or seed funding for larger scale, long term projects; and
4. Support projects that contribute to community healing, recovery and the revitalisation process.



2. The Arts Recovery Project Officer

The role of the Arts Recovery Project Officer was established in mid 2009 as part of a co-ordinated arts response to the impact of the bushfires on communities.

The position was created to enable someone to work in a practical way with local artists at a community level to facilitate projects in the Murrindindi Shire. This was seen as an effective support mechanism for people dealing with loss and trauma who were keen to rebuild their lives and communities but were struggling to find the inner and outer resources with which to do so.

The Project Officer for the Murrindindi Shire was based on the model of Regional Arts Development Officers (RADOs)— one of Regional Arts Victoria's key programs. RADOs are employed in partnership with local government agencies and assist regional communities to develop and implement programs or projects that will have long-term strategic impact in their community.

The Project Officer position was originally supported for one year through funding from Arts Victoria and the Victorian Arts Centre. However, given the ongoing need in the community it has recently been extended for another year, until June 2011.

Aims of the Arts Recovery Project Officer

The aims of the Arts Recovery Project Officer were to:

1. Facilitate artist residencies, exhibitions and projects that may run over the medium to long term; and
2. Broker partnerships with government and non-government operators to facilitate effective project delivery.



3. Objectives of the Evaluation

The objectives of this evaluation were to:

- ▶ Assess how effective both the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund and the work of the Arts Recovery Project Officer have been in achieving their respective aims;
- ▶ Determine the outcomes and impacts of both initiatives for bushfire-affected communities and artists; and
- ▶ Investigate whether arts projects make a particular contribution to community rebuilding and recovery in a post-disaster environment, and if so, how.

4. Evaluation methodology

The evaluation comprised an information review, consultation with staff and internal stakeholders, external stakeholders and grant recipients, as well as the preparation of multi-media case studies.

A full description of the evaluation methodology can be found in the Appendix of this Report.

5. Program delivery

5.1 Delivery of Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund

Funding

A total of \$100,000 was allocated to the Fund. There were 47 applications assessed through nine monthly rounds from May 2009 to October 2010. On average, four individual projects of \$2,500 were funded each month. An amount of \$94,400 was assigned to the funding of these modest grants.

In addition to the small grants, \$4,600 was allocated to supporting small art supplies, equipment funding, event and projects launches in two of the most affected regions between May and October 2010.

Governance

On 10 February 2009 the Commonwealth and Victorian Governments established the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority to oversee and coordinate the recovery and rebuilding program across the state.

Arts Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria jointly supported the two initiatives of the Fund and the Project Officer. Administration of the Fund was devolved to Regional Arts Victoria who agreed to absorb the cost of administrative overheads including staffing in this instance.

Regional Arts Victoria staff were not given additional resources to support their increased administrative responsibilities for administration of the Fund.

The main components of the Fund's model were as follows:

Regional Arts Development Officers (RADOs).

Regional Arts Victoria commenced a program in 2000 that engaged professionally skilled

individuals with arts and cultural backgrounds situated around the state to work as a bridge between local government and their communities. The purpose of their role is to help artists and communities and assist them to access funding and support for projects. There are currently five RADOs to cover the whole of Victoria. In general, this model has been successful. Some problems have surfaced, however, including a perceived lack of matching cultural skills of local government partners and a lack of understanding of their role by local government. Funded by federal, state and local governments, continuation of funding for these roles is subject to re-negotiation when the current funding terms conclude from 2012.

The Arts Recovery Working Committee. An Arts Recovery Working Committee was formed. The group met every few months and initially acted as a forum for discussion and coordination of bushfire recovery activities. It comprised members of Arts Victoria, Regional Arts Victoria, the Victorian Arts Centre, the Geelong Performing Arts Centre, VicHealth, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, and Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority.

Administration

The Fund was modelled on Regional Arts Victoria's existing broader Regional Arts Quick Response Fund, which offers grants to regionally-based artists for 'Toe in the Water' grants of up to \$5,000 or 'Project and Skills Development' - of up to \$15,000.

Following the 2009 Victorian bushfires, management at Regional Arts Victoria and the Victorian government offered funding to Regional Arts Victoria to administer quick response grants to bushfire affected areas.

They used office systems already in place, including the Regional Arts Fund program infrastructure. The existing RADOs from around the state were mobilised and the Project Officer positioned in Murrindindi Shire to offer on-the-ground support for individual artists and help with project referrals and planning.

The Fund grants were offered on a monthly basis, whereas Regional Arts Fund program funding is offered continually. This monthly cycle of funding enabled staff at Regional Arts Victoria to manage the workload associated with administering the grants. Monthly teleconferences with RADOs and the Project Officer were scheduled to assess applications for the following month. This was a successful arrangement, despite some applicants feeling they had to rush to meet monthly deadlines to avoid missing out on that month's funding, in case it was the last time the money was available to them.

The application process

The Quick Response Fund was available for artists, community groups, health services, or individuals working in communities using art to help with community rebuilding. The Fund was intended to attract a range of art workers.

Applications forms and guidelines were provided to prospective grant recipients, who were also asked to discuss their project idea with a Regional Arts Victoria staff member or RADO prior to submitting their application.

Further details about the application process can be seen in the Appendix of this report.

Program delivery

The Quick Response Fund supported 47 projects from a total of 90 applications received between May 2009 and October 2010. There was a 52 per cent success rate for funding worth \$95,400.

Successful applicants were sent a project acquittal pack, following the mail-out of their project documentation.

Acquittal reports were requested 45 days following the completion of the project. If this deadline was missed, Regional Arts Victoria staff followed up by telephone to discuss the situation, taking into account the sensitive situation a number of applicants were in due to the fires.

Of approved projects, 83 per cent of applicants were successful the first time they applied; 17 per cent of applicants were successful after resubmitting their application, which was encouraged at the discretion of the Regional Arts Victoria team.

5.2 Delivery of work of Arts Recovery Project Officer

The Arts Recovery Project Officer position was created as a complementary role to the Fund, and to work in other ways to facilitate arts projects and activity.

Set-up and administration

The Project Officer was located in the Murrindindi Shire—the area most affected by the bushfires—to work with people in that region. This area included the towns of Kinglake, Marysville, Flowerdale, Toolangi, Buxton, Narbethong, Alexander and Yea.

The Project Officer was initially assigned a desk in the Alexandra office of the non-government service provider Berry Street. Counselling and support services for the Project Officer were also offered at this facility. It soon became clear to the Project Officer that the arrangement was not ideal because of lack of office space and minimal administrative support. Utilising counselling services within Berry Street was not practical due to the close working relationship between the Project Officer and the assigned counsellors, which compromised the relationship between counsellor and client.

In response to these issues, the Project Officer rented a flat in Alexandra for the employment period and set up a home-based office. Counselling services were made available in Shepparton through Regional Arts Victoria.

Funding and working hours

The Project Officer position was funded at \$35,000 by the Victorian Government with other funding from Federal government, as well as Regional Arts Victoria's core funds and the Victorian Arts Centre. The role was designed as a 37 hour week for one person. In reality, it has

been a 45 hour week, with additional ongoing work after hours and at weekends.

The process

The Project Officer made personal contact with individuals and groups and referred them to the Fund pool at Regional Arts Victoria. Because of the size of Murrindindi Shire and the numbers of prospective projects arising in the community in need of funding support, the Project Officer required support from arts workers in the Shire to reach as many people as possible. Because Murrindindi Shire Council does not have a dedicated arts or cultural worker the Project Officer was not able to receive the same level of administrative support that other RADOs had from other Councils.

The Project Officer also worked closely with RADOs in other shires, as well as with Community Engagement Coordinators. She also attended regular Community Recovery Committee (CRC) meetings to discuss bushfire recovery initiatives.

6. Outcomes and impacts of the Initiatives

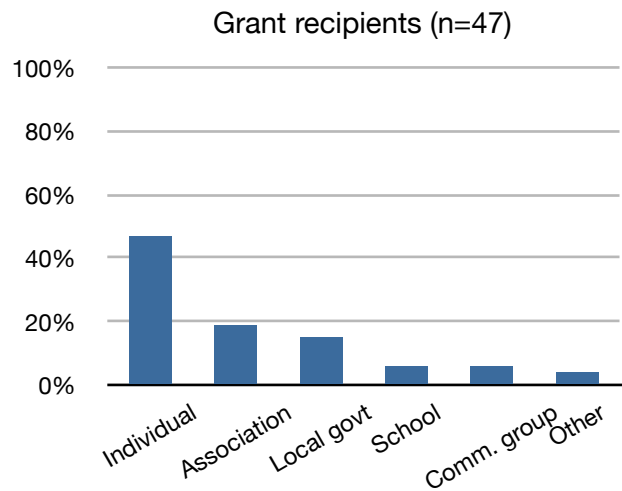


Outcomes

The evaluation revealed that the objective of supporting local artists to work within their communities on arts recovery projects has clearly been met.

At the end of December 2010, 47 projects had received funding through the program. The grants were accessible to a range of artists for a variety of projects. Project participants ranged in age, gender, ability, and background. There were grant recipients with disabilities, including a legally blind photographer whose project was considered to be a great success.

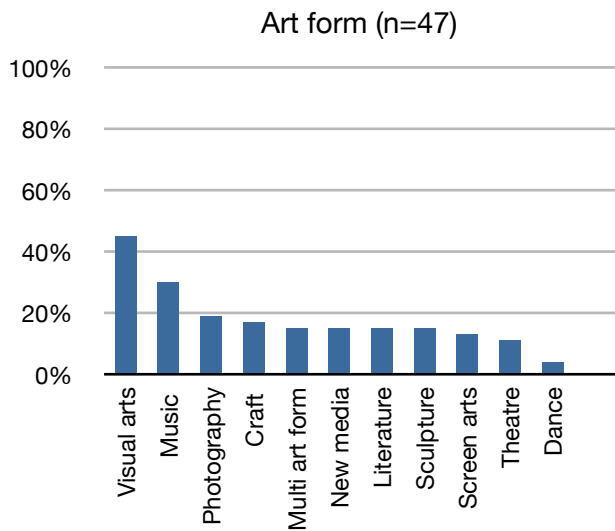
The Fund provided support mostly for individual artists, although there were also some associations, schools, community groups and councils that received funding. Just under half (47 per cent) of grant recipients were individuals; just less one in five (19 per cent) were associations; 15 per cent were local government; six per cent were schools, another six per cent of grant recipients were community groups; and two per cent were 'other'. This is seen in the following graph.



A broad range of art forms were funded, although the majority of projects (45 per cent) were in the visual arts. Thirty per cent of projects featured music; 19 per cent of projects were photographic; 17 per cent were categorised as craft. Literature, multi art form, sculpture and new media projects each comprised 15 per cent of all projects granted. Screen arts projects were slightly less at 13 per cent; 11 per cent of granted projects were theatre; and four per cent were dance.

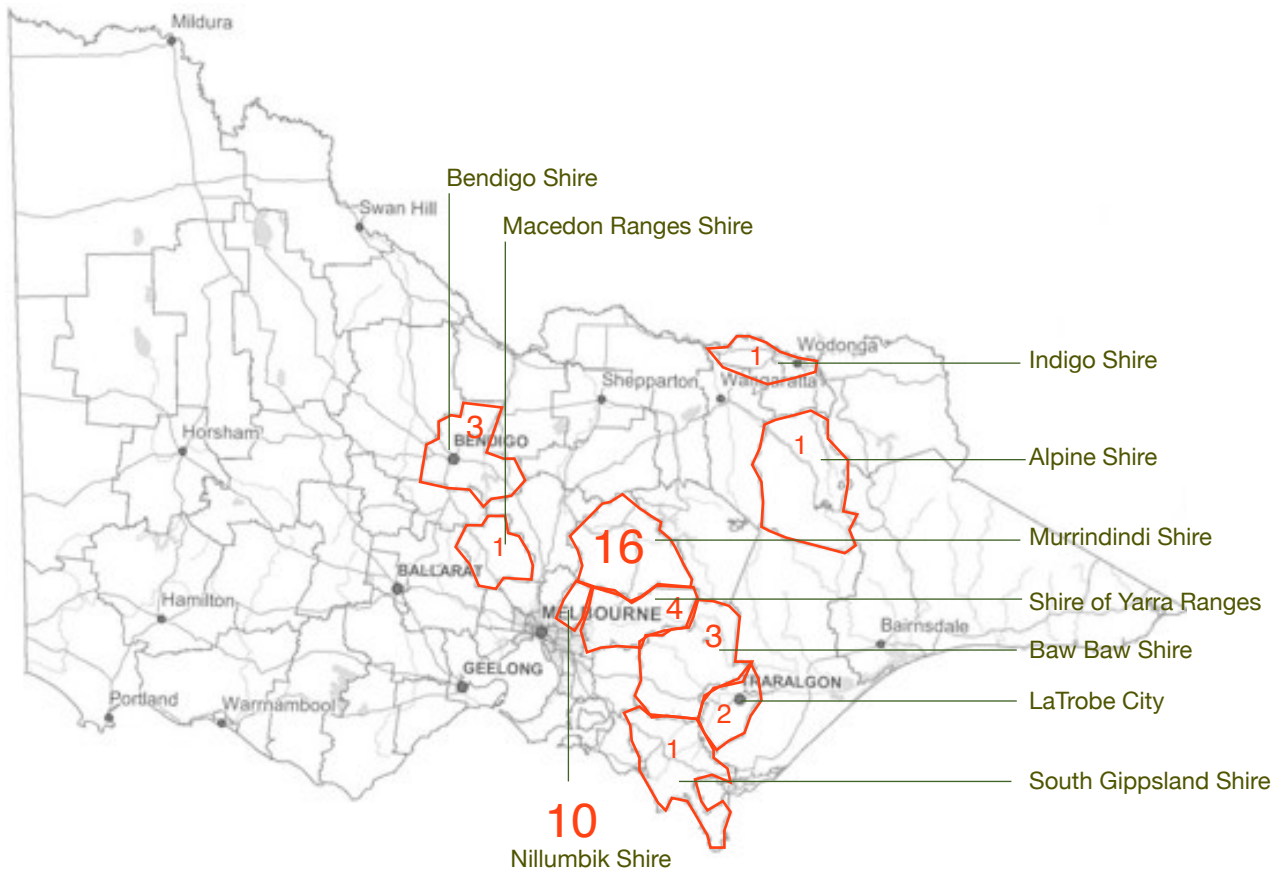
The projects were of greater appeal to women. However, there were specific projects that men participated in, including the Steel Pan Band in Marysville, the Flowerdale Men's Drumming Workshop and blacksmiths working in The Tree Project. Men were more likely to take part in project activities if they saw other men participating.

The range of art forms available for community involvement optimised the reach of the projects into the community, perhaps encouraging wider participation. This range of project types—shown in the following graph— appealed to people of varying ages, interests and abilities. This was an important contributing factor in disaster recovery.



Project locations were heavily concentrated in the highly impacted region north-east of Melbourne in the Shires of Murrindindi and Nillumbik, with 16 and 10 projects in those areas respectively. Four projects were situated in the Shire of Yarra Ranges, three in Baw Baw Shire and City of Greater Bendigo, two in LaTrobe City, and one project in each of the following areas: Macedon Ranges Shire, South Gippsland Shire, Alpine Shire and Indigo Shire. This is shown on the following map.

Numbers and locations of funded projects



The combination of the grants and the work of the Project Officer has clearly helped to support local artists to work within their communities on arts recovery projects. This was augmented by what seems to be a steady increase in local government support for arts and culture in bushfire affected areas in recent years, according to interviews with a number of arts and cultural workers in Councils throughout the State. This anecdotal evidence suggests an increase in both funding and support for arts and cultural activities.

The increased support for arts and cultural activities, however, may not be linked to the 2009 Victorian bushfires as arts has been part of the culture of local government activities in recent years.

How the Project Officer helped to deliver arts recovery projects

The full benefits of the Fund were only realised by the complementary work of the Project Officer, whose skills, experience, commitment and disposition were highly suited to the appointment. The Project Officer played a significant role in helping artists realise their project aims. Unlike an existing RADO working in a region with existing infrastructure and a stable community, the Project Officer stepped in and supplemented community capacity-building in areas where capacity no longer existed or was diminished due to the impact of the fires.

For many artists, the personal support of the Project Officer delivered more valuable outcomes to them than the grants alone. This was because the success of the projects for many artists related to the networks and connections created, the feeling of moral support and encouragement, practical advice, and for some, the opportunities for their project to grow beyond the life of the current project. A

number of grant recipients felt that without the personal support of the Project Officer they would not have been successful in their application, nor would they have had the vision to shape their project into a marketable and practical idea.

The Project Officer working independently of government was perceived as a benefit by grant recipients, as many people felt their lives had been infiltrated by government since the bushfires. The independence of the Project Officer meant that many grant recipients were more open and honest about their project objectives, as they perceived her as an ally.

The work of the Project Officer has been seen to fundamentally improve and increase the delivery of arts projects in the Murrindindi Shire. Only one in four declined applications were from Murrindindi Shire; a lower rate than the rest of the state. This is testament to the success the Project Officer had working with artists to shape applications that were likely to be approved. She worked in a range of capacities, including one-on-one with individual artists giving advice and support, in conjunction with Council, committees, artists' groups, service providers, schools, state government, The Authority, Arts Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria.

The Project Officer's achievements included brokering new partnerships, raising money, working on scoping studies, planning and development of new projects and initiatives, and helping to organise exhibitions. Some specific examples have included:

- ▶ Assisted the Kinglake Community Recovery Committee with planning ideas and initiatives, including working on securing a home for the arts in Kinglake, and helped to stage a high profile exhibition— *Emergence*— at Federation Square in Melbourne to coincide

with the second anniversary of Black Saturday in February 2011.

- ▶ Worked with Berry Street case managers in identifying community members at risk;
- ▶ Advised and assisted artists and community groups with writing grant applications;
- ▶ Networked, supported and advised Arts and Cultural Officers from Nillumbik, Bendigo, La Trobe and Beechworth Shire Councils, situated in areas affected by the 2009 bushfires;
- ▶ Acquired \$4,000 from the Department of Education and Training for ongoing support of After School Art Therapy program at Buxton Primary School.

tracks, and other art and cultural exhibitions and festivals.

Without the work of the Project Officer the positive impact of the Fund would have been compromised, as would have the realisation of other broader community projects and relationships, which she helped to achieve.

Impacts

The positive outcomes from arts recovery projects for artists and their communities have been considerable.

The full extent of the support provided by the Project Officer in Murrindindi is difficult to quantify, in spite of her extensive achievements. New relationships have been brokered, projects have been further funded, and social networks within communities have started to be rebuilt. Those wishing to grow or continue their project were given enough support and information from the Project Officer to do so independently.

The tangible achievements of the Project Officer have not only benefited those who have received the Fund grant, but also artists in the broader community, their families and communities. Through her connections, proactive instigation of new relationships and compassion, she helped to broker broader community rebuilding projects, including infrastructure development, nature and walking



Outcomes

There is growing evidence in current literature that the arts plays an important role in disaster recovery.¹ This evaluation report supports this evidence. The Quick Response Fund, accompanied by the work of the Project Officer, has been crucial in the recovery process, to help communities unite and heal.

How the Fund grants helped to galvanise, unite and heal communities

Discussions with grant recipients across Victoria revealed that their projects have clearly contributed to community rebuilding. This has been achieved by delivering the following community benefits:

Art as a healer. Counseling is good, but art can be better. Colour, touch, and vibrational qualities of music can touch people's emotional core. People reported to be all talked out, they didn't want to use words anymore, or when they did it was more natural to talk while moulding felt, quilting, painting, making a mosaic or banging a steel pan. They could share stories in a group, in their own time, with laughter and tears following close on each

other's heels, as humans have done for millennia.

Some examples of projects that facilitated healing qualities included:

- ▶ Strathewen Letterbox Project- a creative project that enabled locals to meet weekly to create mosaic letterboxes whilst giving participants opportunities to talk and reflect on the bushfires and connect with each other;
- ▶ Georgie Walsh's exhibition *Blessings* in Kinglake and the extended region- seasonal photographs of the Yarra Valley through the year following the bushfires, giving viewers a focus for discussion about how the landscape changed and its impact;
- ▶ Getting Back to the Studio project- a ceramics class in Cottles Bridge that offered opportunities for participants to talk and offer support for each other;
- ▶ Beth Page's Post Black Saturday Arts Renewal Project in Buxton- using creative arts and the spoken word in a therapeutic community project to reflect on the twelve months after the bushfires;
- ▶ Matthew Cairns' Touched by Fire project, based in Yarra Ranges- a film recording the personal stories of the community from across the state.



We drew comfort from being with each other, no words were needed, and we understood each other's pain and sorrow.



Grant recipient, Strathewen

¹ See accompanying Literature Review report for further evidence and discussion about the role of the arts in disaster recovery

Healing Through Poetry project. Art as a healer.

The project. The Melbourne Poet's Union received \$1,500 through the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund. The purpose of the project was to host a workshop for bushfire survivors to use poetry in the healing process.

Marietta Elliot-Kleerkoper, President of the Melbourne Poet's Union and project manager felt it was important to give people the opportunity to get together, provide emotional support, network, have lunch, and listen to how experiences poets and writers express their feelings relating to the disaster through their writing.



The funding received from the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund was considered perfect for the scale of the project. It was a manageable amount of money that went directly towards tangible expenses such as the hiring of the venue and catering.

Project outcomes. The participants in the writing workshops reported they felt a sense of community as the workshops helped them to unlock the writing process. They valued the chance to share their experiences of the bushfires through the written word. Many participants said they felt something spiritual from the event, as if it made the aftermath of the bushfires easier to bear.

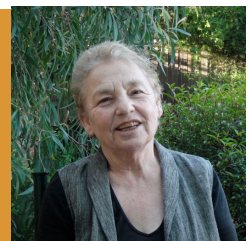
After the project. The Quick Response Fund gave the Melbourne Poet's Union the opportunity to give to others. The group is considering ways in which it can use the work that was created in the workshop in other events, including combined poetry and art exhibitions at the Eltham Courthouse. This will give people who participated in the workshop a chance to share their work with a wider audience.

The project was an example of a low profile and modest project that has contributed to the emotional healing and well being of its participants and is likely to have long-term positive effects.



“The outcomes were more subtle that you might expect.... the participants gained a sense of community and it made the experience easier to bear”.

Marietta Elliot-Kleerkoper



Building confidence. The projects have helped people build confidence, learn something new, temporarily forget their troubles, and reinforce a positive self image.

Interviews with grant recipients who ran projects involving community participation said it was clear that those who were involved showed evidence of increased confidence from having learned something new. Some examples of these projects included:

- ▶ Triangle Steel Pan Band Project in Marysville- adults and teenagers, men and women from the fire-affected Triangle area learning to play a new instrument as part of an ensemble;
- ▶ Healing Through Poetry in Eltham- developing skills in poetry and writing through workshops;
- ▶ Triangle Arts Group in Marysville- engaging children from Marysville Triangle in structured expressive arts activities;
- ▶ Recovery Through Drama at Mia Mia Primary School in Redesdale- teaching children drama and acting skills;
- ▶ Creative Elements of Bushfire Themes in Yinnar- Creative workshops for young people with disabilities in Gippsland to acknowledge the participants' experience of the fires and provide an opportunity for healing through the arts;
- ▶ Community Bushfire Recovery Quilt in Meeniyan- women working together to learn quilt making to create trust, healing and strength.

Creating memorials. A number of projects contributed towards galvanising and healing community by providing a place to reflect and commemorate. There have been a range of outstanding works of art that have been created

through the Fund that can act as memorials. These will become living objects that represent feelings that are hard to express, and give people an opportunity to recall memories and tell stories. Some examples included:

- ▶ The Tree Project in Strathewen- the creation of a steel memorial gum tree that was formed by involving blacksmiths and contributions of steel leaves from around Australia and the world;
- ▶ Nangara Reserve Attraction- a community-led project that connects art and nature by providing interpretive artwork that encourages reflection;
- ▶ Community History Mural Project in Rawson- a community mural in response to the environment;
- ▶ AFTER: Art From The Extended Region- a Black Saturday mural in Kyneton made from donated community china, salvaged from bushfire-affected properties.

Building new communities. The act of reaching out or getting out, whether people have been participants or part of an audience, has created new connections where previous ones have been severed by the fires. These arts projects helped facilitate new kinds of communities.

A number of new communities were formed because small amounts of money were given to large numbers of recipients, many of whose projects involved a considerable number of participants and high audience numbers. New connections were seen to be made between project participants, as well as between project teams and the wider community through audience, donations to bushfire recovery committees, and through in-kind support from members of the wider community.

Strathewen Letterbox project. Building new communities.

The project. After the bushfires, Strathewen resident Marion Oakley wanted to do something that would bring some colour and life back into the area. Marion was successful in receiving \$2,500 through the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund to start a project that involved creating mosaic letterboxes to present to local residents who had been affected by the bushfires.



She sent a text message out to everyone she knew and formed a group of about 30 Strathewen women who came to her house on a weekly basis.

The project attracted sponsorship and in-kind support including from Bunnings, Bridges Restaurant and Nilumbik Council.

Over the ensuing months people beyond Strathewen became aware of the project and some were interested in participating. After 10 months the initial group of 30 had grown and included 50 people from outside the community.

Project outcomes. The weekly mosaic workshops became an important routine for the participants, who took comfort in being with others who had shared the same traumatic experience. The project attracted considerable media attention. An official launch was held in August 2010 when 60 letterboxes were presented to residents of Strathewen. The event attracted 400 people, including Christine Nixon and government representatives. "It was not just the letterboxes, it created love", said Marion Oakley.

After the project. The mosaic letterboxes have been dotted around Strathewen to indicate where new houses were being built. They are a reminder of how art has helped to heal those who participated, who have also had the pleasure of giving to others in the process.

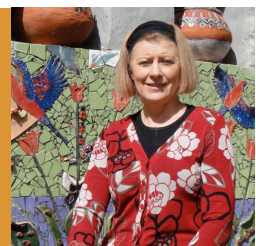
New connections have been made through this project between local participants, between Strathewen and other communities, with in-kind support and donors, with the wider community, and importantly, with the residents of Strathewen who are beginning to return to the town. Marion is aware of a former local resident who had felt unable to come back to Strathewen since the fires, but the presence of a beautiful mosaic letterbox outside the home where her brother perished has given her the impetus to return.

People have been leaving notes of support and good wishes for each other in the letterboxes, which is helping to build and rebuild connections between people in the area.



"Without that original grant from Regional Arts Victoria, the project would never have got where it did".

Marion Oakley



At December 2010 the actual project participants were confirmed at 2,436, with more than two thirds of projects having been acquitted.

Conservative estimates suggest that when all 47 projects have been acquitted there will be evidence of close to 3,000 participants in Funded projects. It is possible that participant numbers may reach about 3,700.

Participants

At December 2010, 2,436 people had participated in funded projects.

The audience figures demonstrate the potential reach in terms of attendees at events or projects.

From the 32 acquitted projects, almost 17,000 audience members have attended projects, events or shows that were funded by the Quick Response Fund. Viv Mehes' Spirit of the Spine project— a collaborative photographic exhibition— attracted 1,500 people to see the exhibition. The Community Big Sing Project— a massed choir project from Kinglake— attracted 200 audience members to its main event. Other projects attracted more modest audience numbers, however there are some projects such as the Triangle Steel Pan Band that has received bookings for gigs throughout the state and is likely to continue to attract audiences into the future.

Audience

At the time of this evaluation 16,919 people had attended a funded project event as an audience member.

This number will continue to grow because of ongoing projects that will attract audiences into the future.

Some examples of projects that have helped to rebuild communities included:

- ▶ Re-connecting of Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities in Nangara and Warburton through Nangara Reserve Attraction project - Aboriginal Elders who had been previously dislocated were brought back to participate in the creation of interpretive artworks along a walking track that was of importance to the Aboriginal community. Connections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities were re-established through the process of working together;
- ▶ Strathewen Letterbox project - participant group grew beyond Strathewen to include 50 participants from the wider region who met on a weekly basis. This resulted in the establishment of new social networks within and beyond Strathewen;
- ▶ A Journey of Changes - a photographic exhibition created by a blind photographer, which attracted local business leaders to opening night, who then got talking and made new connections;
- ▶ Steel Pan Band in Marysville - attracted participants from beyond Marysville, who continue to rehearse on a weekly basis and have been hired to play gigs around the state;

- ▶ Staging of “Paydirt” in Kinglake - musical comedy attracted large audiences providing important and rare opportunities for people to socialise and celebrate local artistic achievements;
- ▶ Production of “Dimboola” in Redesdale - attracted large local and wider audiences, resulting in the staging of additional shows;
- ▶ Through My Eyes project in Flowerdale - brought three schools together for social contact through the combined art exhibition;
- ▶ Amanda Gibson’s The Tree Project in Strathewen - involved blacksmiths who, through their work, have helped to raise the profile of their craft and brought together a new community of artisans.



The whole project wasn't about me. It was about how do we bring the community together.



Grant recipient, Eltham

Bringing new order. For many grant recipients the arts projects have brought some order to their lives, enabling people to *do* something. Being creative and productive has brought about a sense of order when everything else signified disorder.

A number of projects involved participants meeting on a weekly or regular basis. These projects included the Strathewen Letterbox project, whose participants met weekly for 10 months; the Triangle Steel Pan Band, whose members continue to rehearse on a weekly basis 18 months after the group was formed,

and cast members in the Dimboola production, who were brought together for rehearsals for many weeks before their performances.

Participants in these projects valued their meetings as an important part of their week; one which was regular, predictable and consistent. The venues in which they met became safe and neutral places, in which they could unwind, relax, socialise, learn new skills and work towards the outcome of their project. The new order that was created also related to the new extended community groups that participants became part of, which was stable and consistent.

Allowing people to give. Throughout Victoria there were many examples of individuals and businesses changing their routine in order to give to others affected by the fires. Some projects hinged on the contribution of community members to donate objects or ideas that were integrated into the project.

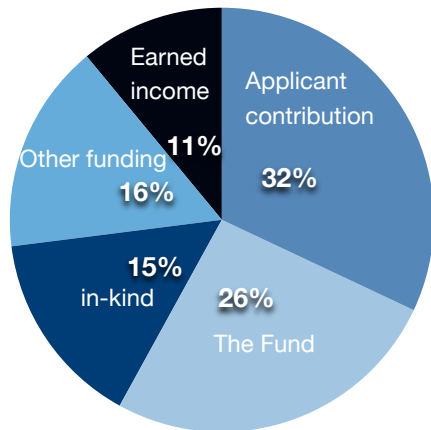
Many of these projects involved in-kind support by community members, including catering, volunteering and participation in productions. Some also managed to raise money for bushfire recovery activities in the process.

Just less than a third (32 per cent) of money that was contributed to the funded projects came from the personal pocket of artists themselves. This is higher than than the proportional contribution of the Funded grant itself, comprising 26 per cent of actual income for projects. This high level of personal financial contribution illustrates the strong motivating factor for artists to give to the community to ensure that their funded project is fully realised.

The level of personal financial contribution to projects can be seen in the following pie chart, which also illustrates that income was sourced

from a range of places, therefore grant recipients were not reliant on the Quick Response Fund alone for the success of their projects.

Actual income for projects (n=32)



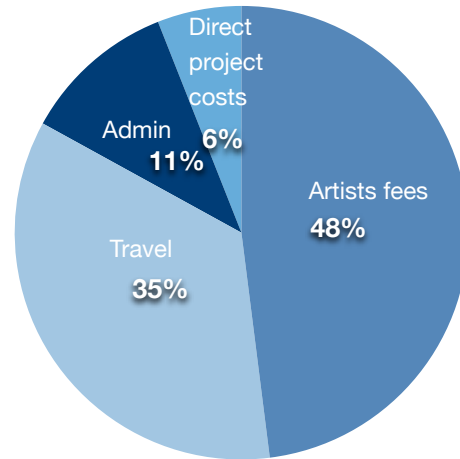
(Note: Small sample size of acquitted project means findings should be interpreted with caution).

Not only did artists contribute their own money to projects, but many also paid people who participated in their project.

Project acquittals indicate that the majority of the funds went towards artists fees (48 per cent of funding). However, discussions with artists revealed that this fee was more likely to have gone to other participants than to themselves. This is consistent with other research that shows artists can be reluctant to pay themselves a wage for their work. It is likely that this attitude would have been held even more strongly in the case of bushfire recovery work. The other main area of expenditure was travel (35 per cent). The remaining 17 per cent went towards administration (11 per cent) and direct project costs (6 per cent).

The following pie chart illustrates these findings, from the 32 acquitted reports.

Actual expenditure for projects (n=32)



There were a number of grant recipients who used their project as an opportunity to raise money for bushfire recovery efforts in their local communities. For example, Andrew Follows' exhibition A Journey of Changes raised \$1,000 for the CFA, and through the staging of Dimboola the Mudbrick Motley Theatre Group raised \$1,500 for the Redesdale Bushfire Recovery Committee. There were many other examples of grant recipients using their project as a springboard to help others.

Ongoing community support through project growth

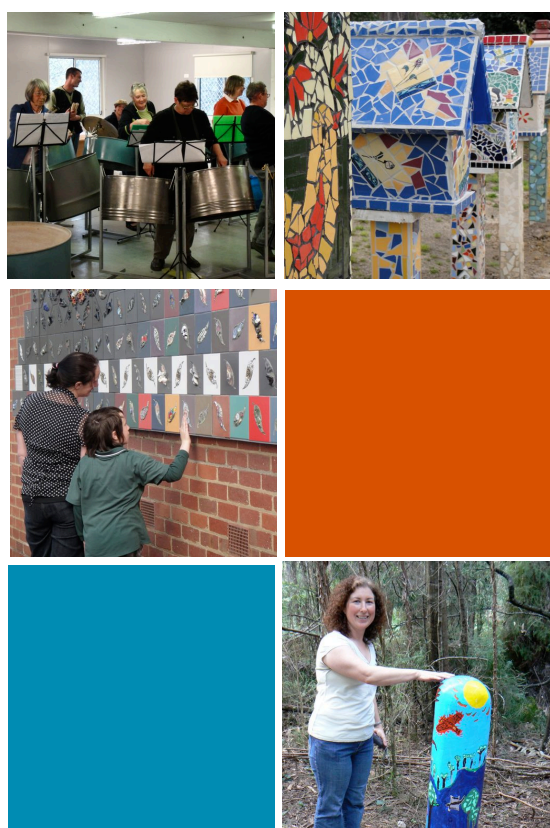
The growth or continuation of projects is likely to contribute to longer term recovery and healing of communities, however, only future evaluations will be able to determine that.

Many artists did not wish to have their project grow or continue. This does not suggest their project was less successful than others whose project advanced. For artists whose projects grew, their grant represented the beginning of a process of attracting additional funding or support, expansion into something larger and have longer-lasting healing benefits to the community. The work of the Project Officer enabled these individuals and groups to attract

more funding and interest in their project which has enabled it to continue.

Of the 30 grant recipients interviewed for this evaluation, 14 have received additional funding or support following the Arts Quick Response Fund. A total of up to \$292,000 in additional funding was sourced that has enabled projects to continue or grow.

The projects that received additional support are listed in the following table.



Projects that attracted further funding or support

Top: Steel Pan Band, Marysville, Strathewen
Letterbox Project

Middle: AFTER- Art From the Extended Region,
Kyneton

Bottom: Nangara Reserve

PROJECT	SUPPORT	SOURCE
Strathewen Letterbox Project	In-kind	Nillumbik Council, Bunnings Warehouse, Bridges Restaurant
The Tree Project	income, sponsorship	VBBRA, sponsors
“Blessings” exhibition	\$17,000	various
Resilience Short Story & Music	Up to \$100,000	FRRR
Playground Art Project- Kinglake	\$30,000 + \$15,000	FRRR, charity
Nangara Reserve	\$100,000	FRRR, Council, VBBRA
Triangle Steel Pan Band	\$6,500	FRRR
Through My Eyes	Salary	Flowerdale Public School
Triangle Art Group	\$4,000	RAV
ART from the Extended Region	\$7,500	Macedon Ranges Council
Recovery Through Drama	\$3,000	YMCA
Community Bushfire Recovery Quilt	\$1,500 + \$3,000	LaTrobe Council + donations
USB Project	\$3,000	Salvation Army
Gorgeous Voices	\$1,500	Quick Response Fund
TOTAL	\$292,000	

Triangle Steel Pan Band. Just keeps growing.

The project. Rita Seethaler has always been an amateur drum player; she played the steel pan in Switzerland before she moved to Marysville a number of years ago. Rita received funding from the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund to build a set of steel pan instruments to encourage bushfire-affected communities to learn to play as a form of respite following the bushfires. This was the first grant she received for the project. The modest amount of money was an important start and gave Rita the courage to keep going with the project.

Rita started by organising the making or donation of 20 instruments from Australia and overseas. She formed the Steel Pan Band in Marysville; designed to attract participants of all levels of musical literacy, including those who had never learned music. The band currently has 22 members who meet and rehearse on a weekly basis. The rehearsal space acts as a neutral place where people can come and socialise. Initially people wanted to share stories about their experience in the bushfires, but over time they began to talk about other more uplifting things.



The Arts Recovery Project Officer played a fundamental role in helping Rita grow the project. The Project Officer provided personal support and encouragement and sourced other funding to enable the project to expand.

Project outcomes. The project has given participants the chance to learn new skills, and given them the courage to translate this new confidence into other areas of their lives. The social connections made in the group have been sustained for 18 months, and look set to continue. The band has contributed to the rebuilding of Marysville and the broader region by creating new social networks and bringing joy and happiness back into the area for those who participate in the group as well as for those who come to hear the band play.

After the project. The band continues to grow and evolve. Eighteen months after its inception they continue to rehearse weekly and perform at functions throughout the state. They are billed to perform in a high profile event at Federation Square, Melbourne, in February 2011 to commemorate the second anniversary of Black Saturday. They are now in the process of building another set of instruments to put into schools to enable Rita to offer after-school workshops for children and adults. The Project Officer is helping them source funding for the making of a documentary. Rita hopes to be able to organise the first Steel Pan Band festival in Australia, to be held in Marysville.



“The first grant gave us the feeling that, wow, this is possible!”.

Rita Seethaler



Art From The Extended Region. A lasting memorial.

The project. Mosaic artist Kathryn Portelli received funding from the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund to create an artwork as a memorial to those in the Redesdale/ greater Bendigo area who lost homes in the bushfires. She created a mural made up of objects salvaged from homes that were damaged or lost in the fires; it stand 11 metres long and contains 280 tiles.

The Fund enabled Kathryn the opportunity to get the project started. She received \$2,500, which she allocated to the making of one particular section of the mural, the 'fire scene', a part of the project that was particularly meaningful to her. She spent 658

hours on the project, with on 22 per cent of her time funded. The rest she paid for from her own savings.

The grant gave Kathryn the confidence that she could start the project without the worry of having to justify her project to other potential funding bodies, as she was intent on doing the project anyway.

Project outcomes. The tangible memorial that Kathryn created has given the community the chance to reflect on and honour the local people who lost their possessions and livelihoods in the bushfires. Because the project is made from items donated by others, the mural has become a true community project. Its memorial nature may help people make sense of the disaster and put their memories into a context so that eventually it may not be as painful. The mural has created a place-based approach to providing psychosocial support.

After the project. The project has given Kathryn Portelli the confidence to pursue other funding opportunities for other community projects. Regional Arts Victoria selected Kathryn to represent the state of Victoria in the Outstanding Contribution Volunteer Awards for the time and efforts devoted to the creating and project management of the Art From The Extended Region project. Since the project, Kathryn has been given the opportunity to work on a community project with the Public Records Office and Heritage Society.



“Regional Arts Victoria believed in artists and knew they would step forward”.

Kathryn Portelli



How the Project Officer helped to galvanise, unite and heal communities

The work of the Project Officer has significantly contributed to the recovery process of communities throughout Murrindindi Shire and beyond. Although assigned to the Murrindindi region, the Project Officer worked beyond these Shire boundaries when able.

The Project Officer made personal visits and telephone calls to every prospective and successful grant recipient in Murrindindi Shire. She developed and nurtured personal relationships with artists, their families and communities. She visited people's homes, properties and studios, sat with them to discuss their projects, and listened to their personal bushfires stories, providing personal emotional and practical support.

She worked closely with people on the following tasks:

- ▶ project scoping;
- ▶ application form completion;
- ▶ brokering networks and connections for venue hire and project collaborations;
- ▶ ongoing referrals for funding and support for the continuation of the projects;
- ▶ providing emotional support for individuals who had been personally or indirectly affected by the fires.

The influence of the Project Officer on helping to heal communities has been felt on personal, community, and state levels. For all artists in this evaluation, the Project Officer had a considerable psychological impact on them and their community, by providing support and validation. She also contributed to the galvanising of communities by brokering partnerships and working relationships within

communities between philanthropic organisations and community groups. She made connections with individuals or groups from within the community who have identified themselves as arts workers. These have included:

- ▶ Triangle Arts Group;
- ▶ Kinglake Ranges Visual and Performing Arts Association (including helping stage a high profile exhibition in Melbourne to coincide with the second anniversary of Black Saturday);
- ▶ Flowerdale Arts Working Group; and
- ▶ 100kmNorth in Yea.

People who had never talked to each other before came together in committees and working groups. The Project Officer acquired funding to help these groups with their bushfire recovery activities, which ultimately contributed to their healing and rebuilding.

In the course of her job, the Project Officer came across projects and opportunities that could have benefited from immediate discretionary cash. These projects and individuals did not necessarily qualify for a grant through the Fund. They included groups of artists that needed to purchase more materials.

“Marilyn’s connections are the most precious thing we have in this region.”

Grant recipient, Marysville

“Without her role I shudder to think where the arts would be.”

Jo Mason, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal

Impacts

Impacts of the Fund in the recovery process

This evaluation has found that arts projects contribute something different to community rebuilding compared to other types of projects.

The arts provide children and adults with opportunities to symbolise, recount and process their traumatic experience. Similarly to other activities such as sports, gardening or other community activities, the arts gives participants a temporary respite from their daily challenges. However, what makes an art project unique is the abstract nature of the activities and the opportunity for individuals to interpret and assign their own personal meaning or memories to the activity. The arts does not rely entirely on verbal communication. This is a particularly important benefit when dealing with communities that have experienced trauma, as many people do not have the words to describe how they are feeling.

“ Trauma makes you wordless. ”
Grant recipient, Eltham

“ Sport takes you away for a period of time but art creates a mindset of creativity that can be taken back to everyday situations. ”

Bruce Esplin, Emergency Services Commissioner

For many artists in this evaluation, the funding enabled them to use a medium that encouraged expression through music, drama, visual art, textiles, performance art, literature, poetry or multi media.

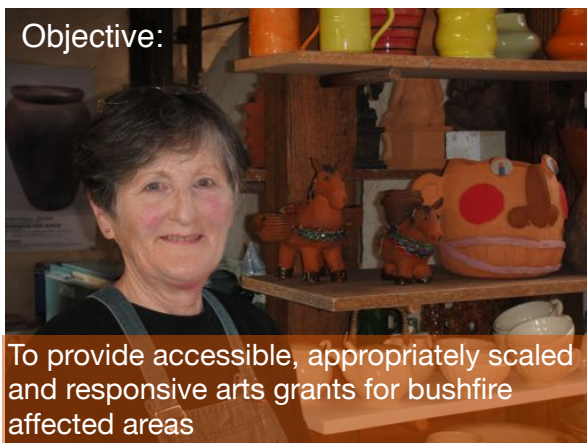
For those who had not been directly affected by the fires, the grant gave them the power and opportunity to do something to help their community by using their skills and talents through arts-based projects. This, in turn, was seen to help to galvanise and heal those communities, even indirectly through performance as a means of gathering people together for a show.

Impacts of the Project Officer in the recovery process

The activities of the Project Officer have demonstrated that working on the ground with individuals and communities makes a valuable contribution to their recovery. Facilitating creative expression and consequent social connection has helped these communities to respond to unexpected change in creative ways.

The individual attention the Project Officer has given to artists, their families and communities has helped people feel less alone. Because she was not working directly as a government representative the Project Officer was perceived as independent, which was an important aspect to having been so well received.

All grant recipients interviewed in the Murrindindi Shire for this evaluation felt that the work of the Project Officer was crucial to the success of their project.



Outcomes

Accessibility of the grants

For most artists, the grant was perceived to be accessible. The process was simple, turnaround was fast, and their projects could start immediately.

There were a few grant recipients, however, who felt there were inconsistencies in the eligibility criteria. Examples included:

- ▶ A poetry artist felt the grant was tailored more for the visual and performing arts with higher profile outcomes;
- ▶ Some applicants felt they had to include professional artists in their project, whereas other believed they would be refused funding if they were professional;
- ▶ A literature group felt they had to tailor their project to be more focused on audience numbers than participation;
- ▶ A grant recipient was funded to put on an exhibition would rather have produced a book but felt discouraged from pursuing this lower profile activity.



We needed to be seen to be doing the right thing, not just doing the right thing.



Grant recipient, Marysville

There were other artists whose projects required more discretionary spending such as for the purchase of materials. Anecdotally, the Project Officer came across a number of these types of artists who did not pursue a grant for this purpose and therefore did not have what they needed for their project.

A number of funded projects were long-term activities, by virtue of the fact that they were designed to help rebuild communities. The Fund did not offer repeat grants. Therefore artists of long-term projects were required to source their own funding for the continuation of their projects. A number of artists felt this demonstrated a lack of genuine support and commitment for their project on the part of Regional Arts Victoria. Some artists overcame this barrier by submitting an application for the next phase of their project as a new project, which they acknowledged was not strictly accurate, but felt it was the only way to enable their project to continue. This was more common amongst artists who did not have the support of the Project Officer.



In areas of need there should be an ongoing commitment.



Grant recipient, Flowerdale

Appropriateness of the scale of grants

For most recipients, the grant was appropriately scaled and responsive to the needs of the bushfire affected communities.

The majority of grant recipients had never applied for funding before. The small amount of up to \$2,500 was considered by most to be appropriately scaled. It was a manageable amount for them to handle, even when it did not fully fund their project.

For many grant recipients, the modest funding amount gave them the flexibility they needed to use the money quickly and efficiently. They could take ownership and take risks. A number of artists felt that if they had received more money, they would have felt burdened with the pressure to scope a more elaborate project plan, which many felt unable to do given their personal circumstances after the fires. A larger grant, ironically, may have been more restricting, as they would have felt more accountable and less inclined to take risks with their project.

There was a sense of intensity, focus and determination amongst artists who received the funding to deliver their project—irrespective of total cost. Most grant recipients would have gone ahead with their project even without the grant, although they would have been significantly out of pocket. Amanda Gibson, artist of The Tree Project, has given up her job to manage the growing project full-time. Others donated considerable amounts of personal time and money to their project.

For most artists who had never before received a grant, the modest amount of money they received was an important first step into the world of grants, which, to them, was what signified success.

“ The RAV grant was a bit of finance but it was more about validation as I had been knocked back so much. ”

Grant recipient, Eltham

There were a few grant recipients who felt the amount of money they received was too low. These people tended to be artists who were working collaboratively with a number of other people; or individuals whose projects have grown or extended beyond their original intentions.

The total cost of many projects has been under \$10,000. However, some projects cost up to \$50,000 and were mostly funded by the artists themselves because of the passion and drive they brought to the process. Two examples are the Triangle Steep Pan Band and Art From The Extended Region.

“ The two and a half thousand dollars was lovely but it didn't do the trick . ”

Grant recipient, Marysville

Responsiveness of the grants

The Fund delivered immediate funding support for artists. Almost all artists in this evaluation received word of their success within days of submitting their application, with the funding following soon after. There were one or two who submitted their application at the beginning of a funding round and had to wait a little longer (a few weeks). Because their projects were going ahead irrespective of their grant approval,

waiting a short time for the money to arrive was not perceived to be a problem.

Challenges in applying for funding

Most grant recipients had not applied for funding before. In addition, because most were still recovering from the trauma of the bushfires, the application process was perceived to be onerous and daunting. They were not familiar with the level of accountability expected, particularly since in many cases they intended for their projects to evolve rather than be fully planned before it commenced.

Some artists felt they shouldn't have to justify their project in such detail, particularly since it was intended to help the community.

“ It was too complex. We're not grant-seeking people. ”

Grant recipient, Marysville

For most artists who had applied for funding before and had a history of reasonable success, the application process was straightforward and easy. It gave them an opportunity to articulate their motivations and plans, which, in turn, helped them deliver their project.

There were one or two artists with previous success in attracting grant funding who felt that the time and effort required to fill in the application form was disproportionate to the amount of money they received. One experienced grant writer spent a number of days on the application, to be told that he would receive less than they had asked for. He did not receive a personal visit from the Project Officer and felt that if he had he would have been able

to convey the importance of receiving the requested amount of money.

Grant recipients who had the assistance of the Project Officer found the application process easier as she helped them shape their application.

Barriers in the application process

A number of grant recipients found the application process difficult for the following reasons:

- ▶ The application form was daunting for many who had little or no previous experience applying for funding, particularly in relation to the modest funding amount;
- ▶ The process of having to fill in a detailed written form was difficult for many artists who were still recovering from the trauma of the bushfires;
- ▶ A number of questions were considered to be irrelevant, which made the process more difficult and arduous for some;
- ▶ Those who did not have the help of the Project Officer were more likely to find the process difficult;
- ▶ Some artists were under the impression they had to have professional participants in their team to be eligible, others believed they needed to be amateur;
- ▶ Those who did not receive a personal visit from the Project Officer or a RADO were more likely to feel their project was less well understood and more likely to be scaled back; and
- ▶ The application process became so competitive that the Project Officer had to use considerable influence to recommend worthwhile projects.

“ If it's bushfire work, don't be too demanding with the paperwork. ”

Grant recipient, Marysville

Administering the Fund

Administering the Fund was sometimes difficult for staff at Regional Arts Victoria due to existing workloads. The unexpected and unprecedented circumstances surrounding the bushfires put staff under considerable pressure to successfully administer the program— on top of their current workload— with no additional resources.

However, there was no real expectation of receiving additional resources, as they wanted to be able to offer support to their regional arts community in response to the scale of the disaster.

Management staff at Regional Arts Victoria feel it is important to plan for space in their annual work program to have the capacity to be able to be responsive to these sorts of situations, when they arise in the future.

Impacts

Accessible, appropriately scaled grants of this kind can have considerable benefits. The communities have been able to leverage a huge amount from a series of small grants that were delivered at a time when artists and other people were looking to make positive improvements in their communities.

The immediacy of the grants gave artists and arts workers the validation and encouragement they needed to start their project.

Because of the modest amount of funding, and the speed with which it was delivered to successful applicants, their projects could be nimble, responsive and immediate. Artists received this financial support at a time when they were ready to commence their project. The modest funding gave them ownership and enabled them to take personal risks without being tied to more onerous funding commitments. Their project could therefore evolve and grow in its own way, in response to the needs of the community and their own personal requirements as project managers and artists.

7. Learnings and implications

7.1 Appropriateness of the Initiatives

This evaluation has shown that the overall response from Arts Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria in offering the Fund was highly appropriate to the needs of bushfire-affected communities across Victoria.

The combination of the grants and the work of the Project Officer was a successful model. The combination of these two components contributed to the success of the projects of most of the artists, and provided opportunities for their projects to continue or grow.

The modest funding of \$2,500 or less per project was appropriate, particularly since the money was offered very quickly. The size of the grant was a manageable amount for most artists, particularly those who had not previously managed budgets or received funding. Distributing a large number of small grants was also appropriate in engaging greater numbers of artists to participate, rather than larger sums being allocated to fewer people.

However, the overall budget for the program underestimated the level of need and interest in the program and the benefits it brokered. There were considerably more prospective grant recipients than grants available, illustrating the interest and need in the community for arts-funded projects to help with disaster recovery efforts. As a result, the application process became fiercely competitive, which is arguably inappropriate given the circumstances of the bushfires and the immense need for support, although understandable, given the speed with which the crisis response was designed and implemented.

Where the Project Officer worked, there was additional value extracted through her role and personal effectiveness. We believe it would have been appropriate to place greater emphasis on the Project Officer position. More on-the-ground support was necessary at key stages of the project, including in the planning stage, and also during the project, as a show of support, interest and encouragement.

The application process was perceived by some as inappropriate and inconsistent with the nature of the grants. The process was not well tailored to individuals who had not applied for funding before or for those who were still dealing with personal trauma. The acquittal process was appropriate, particularly given the support, encouragement and flexibility offered to artists by Regional Arts Victoria in submitting them.

Given the long-term nature of community rebuilding following a disaster, the inability to reapply for funding was inappropriate, as artists with longer term ambitions for their projects felt abandoned and misunderstood. Successful funding models designed for disaster recovery work best when they have an inbuilt flexibility to be scaled up or down in response to the recipients' changing needs, particularly when there are long term recovery objectives.

7.2 Effectiveness of the Initiatives

From this evaluation it is clear that the objectives of the initiatives have been met, namely, to effectively support local artists to work within their communities on arts recovery projects, assist in the recovery process through cultural activity to galvanise, unite and heal, and provide accessible, appropriately scaled and responsive grants for bushfire-affected areas.

In the spirit of the initiatives, a number of funded artists contributed their own money to their projects and many also used part of the funding to pay team members in lieu of paying themselves. This highlights the strength of their motivation for giving, which directly contributes to community rebuilding and their own personal healing.

The areas in which some aspects of the initiatives have not performed as well as others have not hindered the overall effectiveness of the initiatives. These are detailed in section 7.4.

The resources allocated to the initiatives have been used wisely. Importantly, money was allocated to the provision of on-the-ground support to complement the funding grants. The effectiveness of the initiatives could have been enhanced if more resources had been assigned to the Project Officer position for the provision of personal support and assistance on the ground.

The initiatives have been effective in the way in which they have maximised the chance of increased benefits by investment from other funding sources and additional in-kind support that was offered to many artists.

Unintended positive consequences

There were many examples in this evaluation of funded projects that delivered outcomes that were above and beyond those that were intended.

For many grant recipients who had not applied for funding before, the grant gave them their first taste of public exposure and a chance to enter the world of grant funding. Many were astonished at the level of public interest in their work and the confidence it engendered in them.

Some specific unintended positive outcomes included:

- ▶ The attraction of additional funding, in-kind support or media attention to enable the project to continue or grow;
- ▶ Unexpected state-wide and national publicity and exposure for artists;
- ▶ Extension of music and drama workshops in schools;
- ▶ Greater numbers of people attending performances than original expected (over 300 people attended the performances of Paydirt, more than 400 attended Dimboola);
- ▶ The extent to which the projects created an uplifting spirit in the communities;
- ▶ The formation of friendships and professional relationships between individuals and groups;
- ▶ Participants gaining personal confidence in other areas of their lives. For example, participants in the Steel Pan Band project who, according to the project organiser, have felt an increased confidence in dealing with daily routine recovery tasks because of their sense of personal achievement from being in the band;
- ▶ The capacity for fire-affected individuals to achieve new things like performing in public and being responsible for managing large projects;

- ▶ People discovered new interests and passions that they intend to continue, for example, the Steel Pan Band has attracted committed participants with low levels of musical literacy;
- ▶ A range of personal benefits to individual artists that have contributed to their continued personal growth;
- ▶ Opportunities to raise money for bushfire recovery activities that were not expected.

7.3 Key drivers of success of the Initiatives

The literature review identified a number of elements that are crucial to the success of disaster recovery programs. The initiatives contained all of these, as well as some additional successful elements. They are discussed below.

The speed and simplicity of the grant

The literature review states the importance of providing resources to enable community members to make time and take part in community rebuilding.

This was achieved by the speed and simplicity of delivering the grants. The Fund provided a small amount of money directed towards small projects, or to start larger projects. The turnaround was quick and there were minimal administrative requirements. The resource of \$2,500 or less was manageable to grant recipients and enabled them to purchase simple resources to get their project started.

These were critical drivers of success, as grant recipients had already had to deal with a considerable level of bureaucracy following the bushfires. The manageable nature of the grants and the simple process meant that grant was

easily accessible to people who were still experiencing trauma.

On-the-ground personal support was provided

The initiatives are more likely to succeed when support on the ground was provided from the beginning. Evidence of this was seen in Murrindindi, as the work of the Project Officer clearly enhanced the outcomes of individual projects and contributed considerably to strengthening of the communities.

The Initiatives were community-driven

The Fund was initiated in response to the expressed need for people in bushfire affected communities in regional Victoria to deliver small, locally relevant arts and cultural projects during the early recovery phase. One of the key drivers of the success of the initiatives is the sensitive and immediate response to this expressed need.

The literature review identified that it was crucial to involve communities in all aspects of decision making. The initiatives achieved this, particularly with the added role of the Project Officer, who helped people plan and implement their own projects.

A number of projects in Kinglake are examples of what can be achieved when projects are driven by communities. However, some problems were seen to arise in Marysville when ideas were imposed on communities from those outside the region.

The presence of the Project Officer and Regional Arts Development Officers working from within the communities in the regions helped the projects remain community-driven.

The inclusiveness of the projects

Following a disaster like the 2009 Victorian bushfires, according to current literature, disaster responses must be designed to be inclusive, not to discriminate, and to encourage participation by all. The initiatives were inclusive in nature, as the arts projects they funded were not contingent on age, gender, background or ability. There were many projects that enabled people to learn new skills, and catered for people of all abilities. For example, the Triangle Steel Pan Band was a musical group comprising men, women and children and was designed for people of all musical abilities. Many other projects did the same and incorporated an educative element to encourage participation of people with varying skill levels.

The range of types of funded project was also a key to the success of the initiatives. Many art forms were encouraged, including music, theatre, literature, performing arts, craft, and multi media.

Existing groups and networks were utilised

The projects were more likely to succeed if linkages and networks already existed and worked successfully.

In the City of Bendigo linkages already in place between arts workers, council workers and community service groups were strengthened or supplemented by the Quick Response Fund plus the support of council staff. Coincidentally, in that region, the fires affected disadvantaged communities that were already well linked with service providers, who assisted with the delivery of the Quick Response Fund projects.

The initiatives encouraged and supported projects that needed to respond and adapt to particular settings (such as schools). Evidence-

based research has shown that projects designed for children, for example, in their schools to create a sense of safety and security, are key elements of broader program success.

Recognising that people recover at different rates

The literature review identifies that disaster recovery responses need to accommodate for people recovering at different rates. The design of the Quick Response Fund acknowledged this important factor, by offering grants for up to 18 months after the bushfires. It also incorporated a program extension after the first \$50,000 had been spent, in response to continued interest from the community in applying for the grant.

The Project Officer worked with prospective grant recipients and decided with them whether they would be ready to take on a project yet or not. This was crucial to the success of the Initiative.

Acknowledging that strong communities are diverse in their activities, opportunities and people

According to the literature review, a successful response to a disaster must recognise that a variety of project types run by a range of different sorts of people will help to build a strong community.

The Quick Response Fund supported projects across a wide range of art forms from all major fire-affected regions in Victoria. Grant recipients were demographically diverse. Project participants included children and adults, men and women, and people of all skill levels and ability, and people with disabilities.

Sharing stories

A common theme in the literature as a response to bushfires across Australia has been the value

of producing stories to maintain and share history and local knowledge.

For people who experienced the trauma of the 2009 Victorian bushfires, having an opportunity to share fires stories and reflecting on the events of the disaster was extremely important. A number of funded projects enabled them to do this, particularly those that involved participants meeting on a weekly basis, as a neutral setting was created and people could talk if they wanted to without any pressure, whilst having something creative to do.

The Project Officer also became an important contact and personal support to grant recipients, who sometimes needed to debrief about their personal experiences.

Improving health outcomes

The literature shows that arts-based interventions have been seen to be effective in reduce adverse psychological outcomes, although the extent to which this is achieved is largely unknown.

Discussion with grant recipients revealed that their participation in funded projects has had significantly positive effects on their emotional health. The feeling of community, the emotional support, the opportunity to give to others, the ability to learn new skills and do something creative and positive have all contributed to the increased well being of grant recipients. And other studies have shown that emotional well being can have a direct impact on physical health. Only long-term evaluations can determine how sustained these benefits have been.

Reflection and commemoration

According to the literature, following a disaster it is important for people to have strong iconic symbols that can offer a place for reflection and

commemoration. A number of funded projects throughout the state achieved this, and were placed in schools, on walls in main streets and in other public places.

Providing research feedback loops to monitor progress

The literature review identified the importance of monitoring progress to ensure all parts of the community have been reached by the initiatives, including over a period of time.

The Project Officer, working closely with individuals and communities, was able to report back to Regional Arts Victoria about how projects were tracking, and also to recommend prospective grant recipients.

It is also important to monitor the progress of the initiatives as a whole. This evaluation is the first step in achieving this, and has identified the short-term benefits of the program.

Long-term evaluations will be important to build on this body of information and to examine longer-term impacts of the initiatives.

Timing and circumstances

Although not identified as a critical success factor in the literature review, the scale of the 2009 Victorian bushfires created a unifying purpose and cannot be ignored. People within communities throughout Victoria, Australia and the world rallied around and wanted to help. This created feelings of goodwill, drive and energy for particular projects. The vision and energy of the artists in response to the circumstances was a key driver to the success of the initiatives. Many donated considerable amounts of their own time and money to their projects.

7.4 Issues and learnings

There were some minor issues relating to delivery of the initiatives, however these did little to impinge on the success of the projects and their intended outcomes. The main issues were the following.

Application process

The application process was unreasonably bureaucratic and arduous for some people, particularly those who had not applied for funding before and who were recovering from the trauma of their experiences in the bushfires. Those who had to complete the application form alone were particularly challenged by the process. There were also one or two grant recipients with considerable experience writing funding applications who were challenged by the detail required on the application form.

Lack of flexibility and continuity

The Fund did not enable artists to reapply for another grant when they anticipated their project was going to grow or continue. Artists who required more money for the growth or extension of their project had to do so under the guise of a new project. Regional Arts Victoria's other quick response fund— Regional Arts Fund— was only eligible for regional-based practising artists with a demonstrable track record, which was therefore not available for artists in metropolitan locations, or those less experienced.

The initiatives did not offer open ongoing support for artists to assist them in sourcing other funding to enable their projects to continue.

Initiatives were underfunded

The initiatives were designed and budgeted for as a crisis response to a large scale disaster and at the time it was difficult for Arts Victoria to

have been able to anticipate the level of interest for funded projects. Consequently, the available funds of \$100,000 under the Quick Response Fund were not adequate to support the considerable number of qualifying and important projects. The budget available for the Project Officer was inadequate to meet the level of support required within Murrindindi Shire. There was not enough funding allocated for administrative support in Regional Arts Victoria.

The initiatives ended too soon

Different people are at different stages of recovery. Decisions about domestic reconstruction involve grief and take time. With individuals and communities recovering at their own rate, many artists are only now becoming ready to receive funding to undertake a project. The fixed term of the funding meant that there were likely to be projects that were ready to start after the funding was ceased.

Lack of continual feedback action loops and follow-up

It is important to provide continual feedback to monitor progress and ensure all parts of the community are being reached, supported and encouraged. A number of artists said they were encouraged to invite the public and even dignitaries to see their projects, particularly those that attracted an audience. Despite doing this, there were some artists, particularly those in more remote locations from Melbourne, who did not receive a visit from anyone representing Regional Arts Victoria. This resulted in a perception that funding bodies lacked a genuine interest in their projects.

It may be unrealistic for all funded artists or community groups to receive a personal visit from a representative of the funding body under these circumstances, as the program was delivered in response to a crisis situation and

resources were stretched. However, it is important to understand that these expectations are likely to arise so that an appropriate response can be considered.

Despite some artists reporting they did not feel they received enough personal support, the site visits and telephone calls received by 30 grant recipients as part of this evaluation was highly valued by all who participated. This highlights the importance that the evaluation process itself can have on the building of relationships between a funding body and its grant recipients.

Barriers to project delivery

Given the unusual circumstances after the fires there were a few obstacles experienced by artists in the delivery of their projects. These included:

- ▶ Underestimation of the budget to deliver the project, resulting in some artists contributing their own savings;
- ▶ Ineligibility to re-apply for further grants from the Fund— or other sources— to enable the project to continue;
- ▶ The slow rate of business recovery in Marysville has meant that broader community recovery has been more difficult, as some basic commercial infrastructure is still not in place to enable people to move back and resume new lives;
- ▶ The work of the Project Officer was made more difficult in Murrindindi Shire as there was no obvious council contact with whom to form a partnership.

7.5 The value of the arts in disaster recovery

There is a growing body of evidence that the arts plays a valuable role in disaster recovery.

According to current literature, it is not appropriate to talk about 'best practice' in arts-based disaster recovery responses. This is because every disaster situation is different and requires a tailored response. Additionally, arts-based disaster recovery is a relatively new field with little experience to draw on. It is more relevant to consider the range of successful elements and how they may be tailored for other situations if appropriate.

Current literature identifies the following key roles of the arts in helping to rebuild communities following a disaster.

Building and rebuilding communities. The arts help people to create new connections when old ones have been severed. Creative projects can help bring order to people's lives, when everything else signifies disorder following a disaster.

Creating memorials. Tangible pieces of art can be used as memorials to a disaster; they can become living objects that represent feelings that are hard to express, and give people an opportunity to recall memories and tell stories.

This evaluation has shown that participation in arts projects has helped to build resilience that can then be applied to other areas of life in a longer term recovery process. Following a natural disaster, when key infrastructure has been lost, the strength of community is vital for the rebuilding of regional towns. By participating in the Quick Response Fund projects individuals and their communities have

had a reason to come back together and start to connect again, in a positive way.

Sharing stories. Art exhibitions in this evaluation provided an opportunity for artists to tell their stories and for visitors to reflect on their own experiences and share stories with those around them. These stories, and the documented visual art pieces, start to form part of the new social history of the town and community, and can assist with healing and recovery.

Giving. It is important to not underestimate the power of giving. People who have not been directly affected by a disaster are often motivated to help those who were personally touched by it. Performing arts projects in this evaluation gave the artists— most of whom were not directly impacted by the fires— an opportunity to show their support for their local community through performance. These events were social settings in themselves enabling locals to come together to be entertained and to start to reconnect. At a number of these events money was also raised to support the local bushfire recovery teams.

Improving health outcomes. The literature identifies that arts-based interventions have been seen to be effective in reducing adverse psychological and physiological outcomes. A number of Quick Response Fund projects were participatory and involved meeting on a regular basis at a neutral place. These projects proved to be beneficial to the healing of individual participants and in turn their families, communities and social groups.

Opportunities for play. Despite the range of urgent and immediate practical rebuilding tasks that are a priority, people need respite. The arts give people a reason to come together to relax,

and engage in a leisure activity that enables them to take a break. For many people in this evaluation, coming together to play was an important part of their recovery.

Bringing order from disorder. Webster (2006) noted that during the Ash Wednesday bushfires in Victoria's Macedon Ranges in 1993, singing proved to be a successful way of helping the children gain a sense of routine, when everything else around them signified disorder. For Quick Response Fund projects that required participants to meet regularly, this routine was seen to bring some predictability back into their lives.

Mudbrick Motley Theatre Group. Giving to the community.

The project. Maree Hingston, President of the the Mudbrick Motley Theatre Group was aware that those who were not directly touched by the bushfires wanted to do something to help people who had been personally impacted. She organised her local amateur theatre group to stage a production of the 1960s musical play *Dimboola*. The purpose was to provide entertainment for the bushfire-affected communities to assist in their recovery.

Maree was successful in her application for \$2,500 through the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund. This money support led to other in-kind support from the local community group Neighbourhood House and volunteers at the Mudbrick Motley Theatre Group.

Three performances of *Dimboola* were staged in Redesdale and through word of mouth recommendations they put on a fourth performance at Heathcoate. Four hundred people attended the production over three nights, which exceeded their expectations. The grant they received from Regional Arts Victoria covered expenses associated with the show and enabled Maree to compensate some professional actors for travel.



Project outcomes. The level of interest and support from the community was an unexpected outcome. The grant gave the theatre group the confidence they needed to continue with the production and raise money \$1,500 for the Redesdale Bushfire Recovery Committee.

After the project. The grant was an important contributor to the success of the project. The funding gave the group the chance to give something to the community, and they had fun in the process. The Mudbrick Motley Theatre Group will continue to stage new shows as appropriate and returned to their normal rehearsal schedule.



“The funding from Regional Arts Victoria gave us the confidence that our project was worthwhile”.

Maree Hingston



An integrated approach to disaster recovery

To think of the arts as something that should work alongside other broader programs in response to disaster recovery reinforces a traditionally-held view that the arts is a discrete activity, separate from other community-building initiatives such as those relating to health and education. This evaluation has shown that it is more helpful to think of the arts as a crucial component of a holistic response to disaster; a philosophy backed up in current literature.

Current literature discusses the value in viewing the arts as an important component in disaster recovery, in line with other aspects of emergency response such as the rebuilding of health and education networks. Norman (2006) discusses the importance of an integrated and holistic recovery model, a philosophy endorsed by a number of human services organisations including Red Cross, Centacare, and Salvation Army, who are also putting it into practice.

Centacare has recently started to incorporate arts programs into its mainstream service delivery, including community development and counselling following disasters.

Kate Brady, Victoria's State Co-ordinator of Red Cross, believes that the arts should be integrated into all arms of disaster responses, that is, those that address the social, economic, education and other needs. The Red Cross MP3 Player Project was an example of a program that successfully used music to help young people recover from the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

The current literature also stresses the importance of integrating the arts into a well endorsed 'umbrella of care' model of support following a disaster. Proposed by B Raphael in 1986, the model identifies the importance of

providing two levels of support following a disaster; the individual level— to assist the healing of individuals and their families, and the community level— which aids reconnections in suburbs, communities and regions. This model was adopted by the Victorian Government Department of Human Services in 2009 following the Victorian bushfires and this evaluation has shown that the arts has a natural and important fit in both levels of disaster recovery support.

In recent years a number of arts projects have taken place around Australia following natural disasters. These projects have been seen to contribute to community well being and the rebuilding of communities. Some of these are long-term projects are still underway. Recent Australian examples have included the following.

Red Cross's After the Emergency	A program designed for young people who were affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires. An MP3 player filled with stories, music and messages was created to invite young people to share their stories and feelings.
Regener8	Stories, impressions and artworks by the community who experienced the 2006 East coast Tasmanian bushfires come together in a book.
Salvation Army Youth Music Project	Providing high school students in Victoria's fire affected areas with a safe place to process their emotions through music.
Bendigo Bushfire Recovery Initiative	Staging of public events to enable the community to reconnect. More than 20 local artists were involved.
Museum Victoria's Bushfire Collection	Collection of stories, images and objects that document the impact of the fires and encourage story telling.

Regional Arts Victoria's Illuminated by Fire	Eleven projects across Victoria to foster a sense of community to explore the role of fire and its impact.
Regional Arts Victoria's StoryBoard	A create space to share stories, video, artworks and photos from people affected by the fires.
Regional Arts Victoria's At the Coalface	Documentary film made to document the role of the Arts Recovery Project Officer in Murrindindi Shire, Victoria, following the 2009 bushfires.
Regional Arts Victoria's Marysville Big Screen	A large movie screen to provide a place for the community to gather, share stories and participate in workshops.
Circus Oz	Toured through 17 primary schools in Victoria offering a show and workshop to help rebuild communities.

According to David Hall, Senior Manager of Victorian Bushfires unit in Berry Street, a service provider for Victorian children, “the arts is “absolutely important” for integration into disaster recovery programs. He has seen evidence that, following a disaster, the arts allows for the psychosocial movement away from a state of trauma to a state of recovery and it play an important role in creating memorials and laying down memories.

David Barker, Bushfire Response Manager at Salvation Army, Victoria, worked on the Youth Music Project following the 2009 Victorian bushfires. This project was said to have brought the participants “a sense of delight” and “a deep and profound connection” to each other and to their experiences of the fires. The Salvation Army’s strong musical heritage has made it natural and easy for music to be integrated into disaster recovery work.

All of the service providers interviewed for this evaluation enthusiastically endorsed the initiatives from Arts Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria. In recent years they have started to use the arts in disaster recovery work, particularly since the 2009 Victorian bushfires. The positive outcomes of this work have strengthened their beliefs that the arts plays an important role in disaster recovery. Emergency Services Commissioner Bruce Esplin believes the initiatives of Arts Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria have been extremely important and should be highlighted and profiled as an exemplary government response to a single natural disaster.

The Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal recently set up an arts funding stream with money allocated to individuals affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires for arts projects to help with community rebuilding. This initiative was created in direct response to the clear short-term benefits that the Foundation saw from the Quick Response Fund and the work of the Project Officer.

“ Sport takes you away for a period of time but art creates a mindset of creativity that can be taken back to everyday situations. ”

Bruce Esplin, Victorian Emergency Services Commissioner

“ I’m a convert to the role of the arts in disaster recovery. ”

Jo Mason, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal



Some faces behind the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund

Top row: Rita Seethaler, Georgie Walsh, Julia Peddie

2nd row: Rachel Lowe, Judy Trembath, Marion Oakley

3rd row: Lindy deWijn, Matthew Cairns, Kathryn Portelli

4th row: Marietta Elliot-Kleerkoper, Meg Viney, Lloyd Goodman, Lisa Reece-Lane

Bottom row: Trish Reardon, Beth and Graham Page, Nangara Reserve team (Laurie Collins, Anne Plant, Liz and Graham Duell)

8. Recommendations

The Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund has made a significant contribution to the short-term recovery of regional Victorians communities impacted by the fires of February 2009.

Findings from this evaluation can provide a platform upon which to build and accelerate the potential for similar models to be adopted in the future.

The recommendations are presented on two levels:

- ▶ Recommendations for the current environment; and
- ▶ Recommendations for a government art response to another disaster recovery situation.

8.1 The current environment

Continue role of Project Officer for another 18 months

This evaluation revealed that individuals— and communities— recovery at their own rate. The recovery process was seen to neither be neat nor predicible, and some artists are only just now ready to come forward to begin their project. Additionally, for many grant recipients, the assistance and support provided by the Project Officer was more valuable to them than the money provided through the Fund.

For these two reasons we recommend the Project Officer position be continued for another 18 months after the intended termination of the position in June 2011. This extension will enable assistance to be provided to individuals and communities just emerging to start new projects. Ideally, there should be three people working as Project Officers. They could be set up on Murrindindi Shire Council offices, yet their work should be independent of Council.

Provide ongoing financial support

With the financial support of Victorian Bushfire Appeal Fund (VBAF) coming to an end, it is important to consider other means of funds to support artists recovering in bushfire-affected communities.

An ongoing program of support could be either from the government or not-for-profit sector. The model used by the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal is a good example of a model that has been successful in implementing programs for bushfire affected communities. Funding has also been set aside by the Bushfire Recovery Advisory Panel to help meet medium to long term recovery needs in bushfire affected areas, with a new community advisory committee to provide advice to the Panel on recovery priorities.

Government may consider implementing a mid-term support mechanism for people just starting to scope relevant arts projects two to three years on from the bushfires. Existing funding models or new approaches should be considered to provide this ongoing financial support.

8.2 A government arts response to another disaster recovery situation

A range of government agencies already have in place extensive processes for meeting the psychosocial needs of their employees, volunteers and stakeholders. The Department of Human Services is the lead agency for emergency recovery at the state and regional level, working in collaboration with municipalities who have responsibility at a local level.

The emergency recovery process is guided by the State emergency recovery operational plan, which sets out the emergency recovery operations within the context of the Victorian Emergency Recovery Arrangements structures and responsibilities.

The government plays an important role in ensuring the lessons learned from this evaluation are not lost.

Consider simplified application process

Should a similar program be developed again, consider a more simplified application process to take into account the level of anxiety and trauma that some grant recipients are likely to be experiencing. This could be a two-step process that focusses more heavily on up-front conversations with Regional Arts Victoria staff, the Project Officer or RADO, in lieu of the required detailed budgeting and written application process that is currently in place.

Model future responses on key success factors that aid capacity building and resilience

Following the 2009 Victorian bushfires, the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority was formed to provide ongoing support for communities to rebuild their capacity and recover over the long term. Any future government response to a disaster like the

bushfires should be modelled on this successful and exemplary approach, which was consistent with, and complementary to the intentions of the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund and the work of the Project Officer.

Embed the arts into government processes and programs

For governments to build capacity to enable communities to achieve high levels of resilience following a disaster, they must formally recognise the importance of the role of the arts in disaster recovery. This means embedding the arts into cross-sector frameworks. This may include translating findings from this evaluation into policy that is integrated into the wider emergency recovery arrangements.

The fact that the Victorian Bushfire Reconstruction and Recovery Authority team comprised two staff members from Arts Victoria is evidence that government is beginning to recognise that the arts has an important role to play in disaster recovery. This should be encouraged to continue.

Promote findings from this evaluation

For the arts to become embedded into government processes, it is important to promote and share the findings of this evaluation widely, including with all tiers of government throughout Australia and service providers throughout the country, and the world.

It would be useful for Arts Victoria to prepare a communications strategy to outline how government can use findings from this evaluation to inform future planning and processes.

The passion, commitment and experience of other stakeholders such as service providers and the Emergency Services Commissioner could be utilised for this purpose to reinforce the

message for greater impact. Victorian government should use this as an opportunity to build upon its strong record in community development.

Plan for government's capacity to respond to disasters

Staff at Arts Victoria, Regional Arts Victoria, other state government and non-government departments should regularly brush up on guiding principles outlined in their Disaster Protocols, so they have the knowledge and resources to respond to a disaster should another one eventuate.

Monitor and evaluate grant recipients long term

The long-term benefits of the Fund and role of the Project Officer can only be determined if ongoing monitoring and evaluation is carried out. It would be beneficial for a subsequent evaluation of the initiatives to be repeated in three years' time, to explore the long-term benefits of the initiatives. This would provide further evidence to support the value of the arts in long-term community rebuilding.

Future models should incorporate critical success factors

Lessons from this evaluation and accompanying literature review should be incorporated into future models of support in which the arts is used to help with rebuilding communities.

In particular, disaster recovery programs should incorporate small grants, be available to as many qualifying people as possible, have a simple application process and quick application turnaround. A Project Officer to work with individuals on a one-on-one basis should also be factored into the model.

9. Conclusion

The Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund was a targeted program that helped to galvanise community support and unity.

The evaluation found that the combination of small grants and the support role of the Arts Recovery Project Officer was a successful post-disaster model of support. The importance of the role of the Project Officer working one-on-one with community members was invaluable, as was the value of showing interest in each and every funded project.

This evaluation has shown that providing support for artists and communities following a disaster is about providing immediate support.

Through the initiatives it is clear that the arts has performed an important role in rebuilding bushfire-affected communities, similarly to other more tangible infrastructure projects. The arts can be a powerful medium that allows people to express what is inexpressible in words. The projects created a 'caring community'. They provided art as a healer, increased people's self confidence, contributed to new communities, brought order to people's lives, created living memorials to the bushfires, and allowed people to give to others. These outcomes require long-term support for their full benefits to be realised.

The initiatives addressed all of the essential principles of implementation of a community capacity building disaster recovery plan, to varying degrees. They demonstrated good governance, appropriate resourcing (although resources could be more continuous), and mechanisms for grant recipients to provide feedback.

The Fund plus its associated support of the work of the Project Officer has had far reaching

outcomes for individuals and their communities. It has been an excellent example of return on investment of public funds.

The Victorian government has responded to the aftermath of the bushfires in a way that has been seen to benefit and renew communities by protecting and promoting their well being.

The findings from this evaluation contribute to evidence-based research into the effectiveness of specific arts-based programs in disaster recovery. The Victorian government is in a position to take a leadership role by communicating the learnings and important findings.



10. Appendices

Appendix 1: Evaluation methodology

Appendix 2: The application process

Appendix 3: Suggested amended application form

Appendix 4: Discussion guides

Appendix 5: Individuals with whom we consulted

Appendix 6: Literature review report

Appendix 1: Evaluation methodology

This evaluation comprised the following components:

Information review

An information review was conducted to explore the value of the arts in helping to rebuild community after disaster recovery. This included documents and a documentary DVD provided by Arts Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria, as well as journals and articles independently sourced.

We also analysed Australian arts programs that had been implemented over recent years to assist with community rebuilding. A literature review report can be found in the Appendix of this report.

We reviewed outputs from grant (acquittal) reports to understand the application process and to assist with random selection of grant recipients for consultation.

Consultation with staff and internal stakeholders

We spoke with five (5) internal project staff members to gauge their views on the effectiveness of the program. This included staff at Arts Victoria, Regional Arts Victoria and VBBRA. We attended Arts Recovery Working Group meetings on 27 July and 6 September 2010.

We also spoke with eight (8) local government staff members from a range of councils in bushfire-affected areas.

The full list of staff and internal stakeholders with whom we consulted can be found in Appendix 5.

Consultation with external stakeholders

Telephone interviews were conducted with six (6) stakeholders who work in bushfire recovery

in a range of community services organisations. This list of stakeholders can be found in the Appendix of this report.

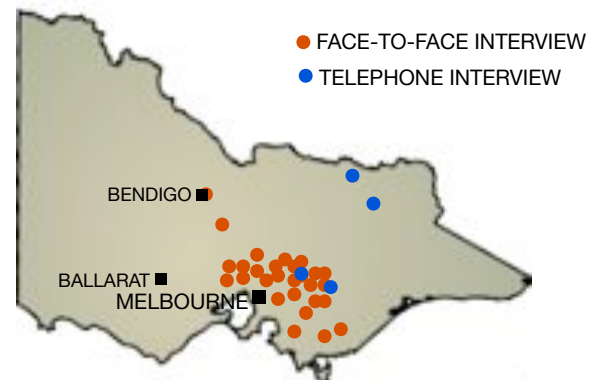
Consultation with grant recipients

We conducted 30 interviews with a representative sample of grant recipients during September-October 2010. Twenty four interviews with grant recipients were conducted face-to-face; six by telephone. Our sample comprised:

- ▶ A geographical spread across Victoria; and
- ▶ Individuals working in a range of art forms, including visual arts, performing arts, literature, photography, new medial, theatre, dance and craft.

The following diagram shows the location of interviews with grant recipients.

Diagram 1: Location of interviews with grant recipients



We prepared five multimedia case studies with grant recipients to illustrate personal stories of how the Fund has assisted them and their communities. A full list of grant recipients consulted for this evaluation can be seen in Appendix 5.

Appendix 2: The application process

The application form and guidelines were designed by Regional Arts Victoria staff. Some diligence was taken to ensure that the forms were accessible to those who may not have completed a funding application before or did not have the resources to complete a detailed application.

Applications for the Quick Response Fund were accepted from May 2009 to February 2010. There were nine funding rounds closing on the first of each month from May, except for January 2010. Applications were assessed by a team of six Regional Arts Victoria staff in the Creative Communities Victoria department, which included the Regional Arts Development network and the Arts Recovery Project Officer (ARPO).

Potential applicants were asked to contact a Regional Arts Victoria staff or a RADO prior to submitting their application. This allowed Regional Arts Victoria staff to advise the applicant on key considerations in submitting the application, and assess whether a grant through the Fund was the most appropriate avenue to resource the project. This also had the benefit of saving applicants who were unlikely to be successful the time and effort required to submit an application.

Many prospective grant recipients living in the Murrindindi or Nillumbik Shires received one-on-one support from either Marilyn Gourley, Arts Regional Development Officer, or Irene Pagram, Arts and Cultural Coordinator at Nillumbik Shire Council. This support took the form of telephone conversations and, in many cases, face-to-face meetings and discussions. Applicants in other parts of the state did not tend to receive this one-on-one support during the application process, unless they actively

sought the help of a RADO working in their area. Decisions about the success of applicants were made by Regional Arts Victoria, in collaboration with RADOs and advice from the Project Officer.

In most cases, grant recipients were notified about the outcome of their application within days of their submission. This was usually done by telephone or email.

The acquittal process

Successful applicants were required to submit an acquittal report within six weeks of completing their project. Regional Arts Victoria used discretion to exercise flexibility around this deadline, taking into consideration the potentially difficult personal circumstances of individuals following their experience in the bushfires.

Those grant recipients living in the Murrindindi Shire had the benefit of the Project Officer supporting them in the completion of their grant acquittal report.

Appendix 3: Suggested amended application form - Budget

EXPECTED INCOME	\$	EXPECTED EXPENDITURE	\$
Earned income (fees)	\$	Salaries/ fees (including Quick Response Fund grant if appropriate)	\$
Box office	\$	Art supplies	\$
Government grants - Quick Response Fund grant	\$	Catering	\$
Government grants- Council or other	\$	Travel/ accommodation	\$
Sponsorship or in-kind donations	\$	Other costs (specify)	\$
Other income	\$		\$
Sub-total	\$	Sub-total	\$

Appendix 4: Discussion guide

General topic	Question
Awareness	Do you remember how you first heard about the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund?
Application process	<p>How easy or difficult was the application process? What made it easy? What made it difficult?</p> <p>How about the process of reporting after the project?</p> <p>Have you applied for any other programs or funding through Regional Arts Victoria or Arts Victoria? How did this process compare?</p>
Arts Recovery Project Officer	<p>Have you worked with the Arts Recovery Project Officer in your area? What was their value to you? What were they able to facilitate?</p> <p>Is there anything you would have liked the Project Officer to have done that would have improved on the experience?</p>
Outcomes of program	<p>How appropriate do you feel the grant was to your individual needs after the fires?</p> <p>How has the grant contributed to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) your own recovery? b) the community's recovery? <p>Were there any outcomes that were unexpected?</p> <p>Was the timing of the support appropriate?</p> <p>Is there something unique about arts programs? Do you think arts project contribute something different to community rebuilding to other types of projects (eg. sports)?</p>
Ongoing projects	<p>Has the Quick Response Fund enabled you to deliver other projects since the fires?</p> <p>Have there been any obstacles in delivering other projects? (probe nature and extent of obstacles)</p> <p>Have you seen evidence of increased or improved support for arts and culture from local government since that time?</p>
Without the grant	<p>If the grant had not been available to you, what would your situation be now?</p> <p>Do you know of anything else that would have supported you in a similar way?</p>

Appendix 5: Individuals with whom we consulted

External stakeholders

Bruce Esplin	Emergency Services Commissioner	Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner
Janet Cribbs	Manager, Bushfire Recovery Service	Centacare
Kate Brady	State Coordinator, Bushfire Recovery	Red Cross
John Richardson	Strategic Development Coordinator	Red Cross
David Barker	Manager, Bushfire Response Strategy	Salvation Army
David Hall	Senior Manager, Victorian Bushfires, Alexandra	Berry Street
Jo Mason	Grants Manager, Victorian 2009 Bushfire Grants	Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal

Internal stakeholders/ staff

Megan Lancaster	Community Engagement Coordinator, Marysville	VBRRA
Sue Strano	Manager, Creative Communities	Regional Arts Victoria
Victoria Jones	Senior Arts Officer	Arts Victoria, on secondment to VBRRA
Marilyn Gourley	Arts Recovery Project Officer	Regional Arts Victoria

Council staff

Irene Pagram	Arts and Cultural Coordinator	Nillumbik Council
Kate Powne	Coordinator Relief and Recovery	Yarra Ranges Shire Council
Maree Tonkin	Coordinator Arts and Community Partnerships	City of Greater Bendigo
Karen Wittaker-Taylor	Cultural Development Officer	Baw Baw Shire Council
Amanda Owens	Cultural Livability Officer	LaTrobe City Council
Rita Lazauskas	Acting Manager, Wangaratta Exhibitions	Wangaratta Shire Council
Kathleen Brannigan	Community Strengthening Officer	Hepburn Shire Council
Sarah Finlay	Team Leader, Arts, Heritage and Events	Whittlesea Shire Council

Grant recipients

Marion Oakley	Strathewen Letterbox Project	Strathewen
Dagmar Limp	Warburton Film Festival- Show us Your Shorts	Warburton
Amanda Gibson	Tree Project Stage 3: Connecting with the Community	Strathewen
Georgie Walsh	"Blessings" exhibition	Kinglake +
Lloyd Godman	Entropy exhibition and workshop	St Andrews
Lisa Reece-Lane	Resilience Short Story & Music	Wesburn
Nina Lunde	Paydirt	Kinglake
Rachel Lowe	The Tree Project: Documentary	Strathewen
Lindy de Wijn	Kinglake Early Learning Centre- Playground Art Project	Kinglake
Elizabeth Bromley	Felt art wall- hangings in bushfire affected schools	Dixons Creek
Anne Plant	Nangara Reserve Attraction	Jindivick West
Rita Seethaler	Triangle Steelpan Band Project	Marysville
Trish Reardon	Community History Mural Project	Rawson
Judy Trembath	Getting back to the studio	Cottles Bridge
Matthew Cairns	Touched by Fire: A Community Speaks Stage 1	Yarra Ranges
Beth, Graham Page	Post Black Saturday Arts Renewal Project	Buxton
Andrew Follows	A Journey of Changes	Narbethong
Sue Clisby	Through My Eyes	Flowerdale
Marietta Elliot-Kleerkoper	Healing Through Poetry	Eltham
Maree Hingston	"Dimboola" by Jack Hibberd	Redesdale
Julia Peddy	Triangle After School Arts Program	Buxton
Kathryn Portelli	AFTER- Art From The Extended Region	Kyneton
Kathy Vella	Recovery Through Drama- Mia Mia Public School	Redesdale
Marian Rennie	Epicormic Shoots	Acheron
Meg Viney	Community Bushfire Recovery Quilt	Meeniyan
Madelaine Chandler	Creative Elements of Bushfire Themes	Yinnar
Dan Clancey	First Time Theatre	Churchill
Sammantha Hall	USB Project	Flowerdale
Sue Gillett	Gorgeous Voices Festival	Bendigo
Phil Bourne	Men's Drumming Circle	Flowerdale

Appendix 6: Literature Review Report



THE ROLE OF THE ARTS IN REBUILDING COMMUNITY

AN EVALUATION OF ARTS VICTORIA'S AND REGIONAL ARTS VICTORIA'S BUSHFIRE INITIATIVES

LITERATURE REVIEW

NOVEMBER 2010

Client contact

Sue Doyle, Arts Victoria

Consultant contact

Natalie Fisher



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1. Introduction

1.1 Background to the information review

NSF Consulting was commissioned by Arts Victoria to evaluate the bushfire arts activity rolled out by Arts Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria, as part of the government's contribution to rebuilding and recovery efforts in communities affected by the bushfires in February 2009.

Specifically, the evaluation covers two main activities:

1. Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund; grants of up to \$2,500 to support local artists to work in their communities and contribute to the recovery effort; and
2. Arts Recovery Project Officer; a single position created for someone to work in a practical way on a community level with local artists to facilitate projects in the Murrindindi Shire.

A small part of the evaluation process was a broad-brush review of existing programs and activities that involved arts in disaster recovery, as well as a series of interviews with industry experts and services providers about the role that the arts can play in disaster recovery.²

This paper discusses the findings from the information review. The learnings from this process have been fed into the final evaluation report.

1.2 Contextual considerations

The arts has been used for many years in community development work. There is a wide body of research that supports the argument that the arts plays an important role as part of a multi-disciplinary approach to community development.

The context within which the Arts Recovery Quick Response Fund sits is community rebuilding as part of disaster recovery. This is quite a different context to that which supports general community building and development.

Disaster recovery

The Australian government acknowledges that recovering from disaster can be a long and complex process. Disasters can affect individuals, families and communities, and no individual, family or community is affected in the same way. Recovery is more than just replacement of what has been destroyed and the rehabilitation of those affected.

The aim is to leave the community more resilient than before. Communities have the best understanding of their needs and are in the best position to prepare for, withstand and recover effectively from disasters (FaHCSIA 2010).

² A full and extensive literature review was not commissioned as part of this project. This literature review discusses current thinking and gives some examples only.

Resilience

The term 'disaster resilience' has become widely used and accepted within the context of disaster recovery. However, there is also some common confusion and a range of interpretations about what resilience means.

Today, according to the Australian Journal of Emergency Management, resilience tends to be used to either mean a capacity to 'bounce back' or, more conservatively, to resist change. Over recent years, the term has also been adopted and used in a range of more specific ways. In a policy context, in the case of emergency management, resilience might emphasise replacing existing infrastructure. However, if informed by the social sciences, then resilience emphasises the capacity to transform into an improved entity.

In recent years there has been a growing emphasis on disaster resilience in Australian emergency management policy. The aim of current emergency management policy is to use the model of prevention + preparedness + response + recovery to work towards a more disaster resilient Australia; that is one that aims to recognise current and future risk, reduce and manage those risks and be better able to adapt to change and recover from disasters (Prosser, Peters, 2010).

1.3 Key questions

This literature and information review addresses the following key questions:

- ▶ What is the role of the arts in disaster recovery;
- ▶ What are the current models for thinking about disaster recovery and do the arts fit into this approach;
- ▶ What are some examples of successful approaches to integrating the arts into disaster recovery initiatives; and
- ▶ What are the program elements that make arts-based programs successful for disaster recovery?

2. The role of the arts in disaster recovery

2.1 The value of arts in helping rebuild communities

There has been extensive research carried out that identifies the value of the arts in community rebuilding, although less in the specific context of rebuilding following a disaster such as that on the scale of the 2009 Victorian bushfires.

There is a growing body of evidence that the arts provide children and adults opportunities to symbolise, recount and process their traumatic experience. Similarly to other activities such as sports, gardening or other community activities, the arts gives participants something to do with their hands, bodies or minds. However, what seems to make the arts unique is the abstract nature of the activities, and the opportunity for individuals to interpret and assign their own personal meaning onto the outcome or activity.

The arts, which do not rely entirely on verbal communication, have been seen to be effective in addressing children's and adults emotional needs following a traumatic experience. Offering choices in symbol systems- music, drama, visual art, textile art, poetry, writing, literature, oral storytelling, radio and video- is a non-intrusive way to invite individuals to come to terms with their past and move forward.

In their article *Listening to Children's Voices: Literature and the Arts as Means of Responding to the Effects of War, Terrorism and Disaster*— Jane M Gangi and Ellis Barowsky give a couple of examples in which children, through art in Israel, Palestine and Rwanda, felt that they could all understand each other better.

A number of themes arose from the literature review that outline the ways in which the arts have been seen to help rebuild communities. These are discussed as follows.

Building social capital. Social capital in its simplest form can be seen as the benefits arising from social interaction and networks developing wellbeing. Some work has come out of the University of Tasmania, the university of Delaware (USA), and other institutions that gives rise to evidence that that the arts play an important role in helping to build social capital.

Following the Canberra bushfires in 2003, follow-up investigations three and a half years later revealed that one of the greatest sources of help and support for recovery were relationships with neighbours and others in the community (Hawke, p5). The Disaster Research Centre at the University of Delaware (USA) has investigated the dynamics of social capital in disasters extensively. One of the discoveries has been that disasters create useful new structures of community organisation and these can potentially be harnessed for sustained community well being, rather than being left to taper away.

Social capital's greatest benefit is that of allowing a common language across multi-discipline approaches to exchange ideas. It is argued that the use of art as a community tool to express grief, trauma, resilient and triumph both arises from and builds social capital.

Sharing stories. For many people who have experienced trauma or disaster, sharing stories with others has been an important part of the process of healing and coming to terms with disaster. Work from the University of Tasmania identifies that a common theme through community publications as a response to bushfire across Australia has been the attention to the need and importance of producing stories to maintain history and local knowledge. The key factor to the importance of the story, told through art, poetry and the written word is that the stories and impressions are from within the community and led by the community.

Reflection and commemoration. Remembrance is about paying respect to those who died and protecting the human rights of the dead (Tumarkin 2005). While this is foremost in people's minds following a disaster, it is also important to include those who lost homes, livelihoods, pets, places, communities, landscapes, gardens, hopes and dreams. Strong iconic symbols can offer a place for reflection and commemoration.

Museums Victoria has seen that the active collection of stories, images and objects that document the immediate impact of the Victorian bushfires contributed positively towards recovery and renewal. The arts can play an important role in helping communities remember and understand their environment, and this information can be used as a tool for future preparation. The process of achieving a shared journey that is remembrance must be inclusive to acknowledge all losses. Through the arts, memorials and places of remembrance can be created.

Following the Bali Bombings a sculpture has been erected on a headland at Coogee Beach, Sydney, to commemorate those who have died. In Strathewen, which was devastated by the 2009 Victorian bushfires, the memorial process is unique in that it is being community-led and involves a range of art forms including sculpture, craft and art.

Arts-based learning. Arts-based learning is becoming widely recognised as a useful tool to assist children deal with disaster and trauma. Smilan (year unknown) argues that processing information through the creative arts, including drama, visual arts and creative writing, is crucial for children of all ages. It responds to the fact that children are subjected to more imagery in their lives than ever before, and validates this by encouraging them to use imagery to express their feelings. Other experts in the field of art-based learning agree that creative activities enable children and adults to deal with grief.

Improving health outcomes. In the main areas of creative artistic expression there are clear indications that artistic engagement has significantly positive effects on health. Art-based interventions have been seen to be effective in reducing adverse psychological and physiological outcomes, although the extent to which these interventions enhance health status is largely unknown.

Bringing order from disorder. The magnitude of stress, anxiety and trauma following a disaster can be immeasurable. The number of practical considerations and decisions that have to be made can be innumerable. Activities within the arts can give people something to do with their hands that frees their mind from other things. Webster (2006) noted that during the Ash Wednesday bushfires in the Macedon Ranges in Victoria 1983, singing proved to be a successful way of helping the children

keep their minds off the traumatic event and focus on something else. Other literature discusses similar benefits brought to adults when they are given the opportunity to do something that takes their mind off their day-to-day practical considerations following trauma. Arts projects enable people do something; doing something can bring about order when everything else signified disorder.

2.2 Models for thinking about disaster recovery

The models that discuss best approaches to disaster recovery emphasise the importance of a providing a holistic approach that incorporates a number of disciplines. These models do not necessarily operate independently. They provide two legitimate perspectives of looking at disaster recovery, but they both emphasise the importance of looking at contextual and other influences. There is a salient place for the arts in these models, and the arts, like other approaches, should not be considered as a stand-alone activity when used in disaster recovery.

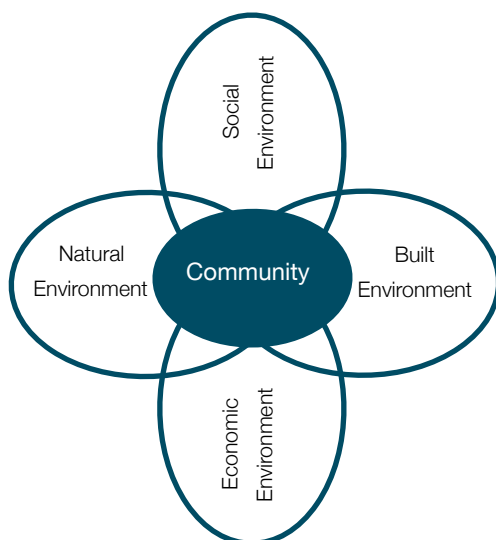
There are two broad models that are referred to in discussions about disaster recovery;

- ▶ An integrated approach; and
- ▶ Psychosocial model.

An integrated approach to disaster recovery

The literature suggests that it is well understood across the human services sector that the arts plays an important role in disaster recovery. It seems to be well understood and acknowledged across the human services sector that the arts plays an important role in disaster recovery. Norman (2006) discusses the importance of an integrated and holistic recovery model; one that was developed concurrently in Australia and New Zealand and that is now widely accepted as the framework of recovery. This model is illustrated as follows:

Figure 1. Integrated approach to disaster recovery



Source: *The Australian Journal of Emergency Management*, Vol 21 No. 4, November 2006

The framework, sometimes known as the 'propellor' or 'pillar' model, is premised on the philosophy that successful recovery needs to recognise that both communities and individuals have a wide and varying range of recovery needs. Recovery can only be successful where all needs are addressed in a coordinated way (Norman, 2006). This theory was endorsed by all of the service providers interviewed as part of this evaluation.

According to Kate Brady, Victorian State Co-ordinator Bushfire Recovery for Red Cross, good recovery needs to integrate the four areas of the pillar model. Most arts projects fit into the social environment arm, although, according to the Red Cross, it is important that they all cross over and work together.

Psychosocial model

A framework outlined by B Rachael (1986) is known as Psychosocial recovery, or the 'umbrella of care' model. This framework is based around two key elements:

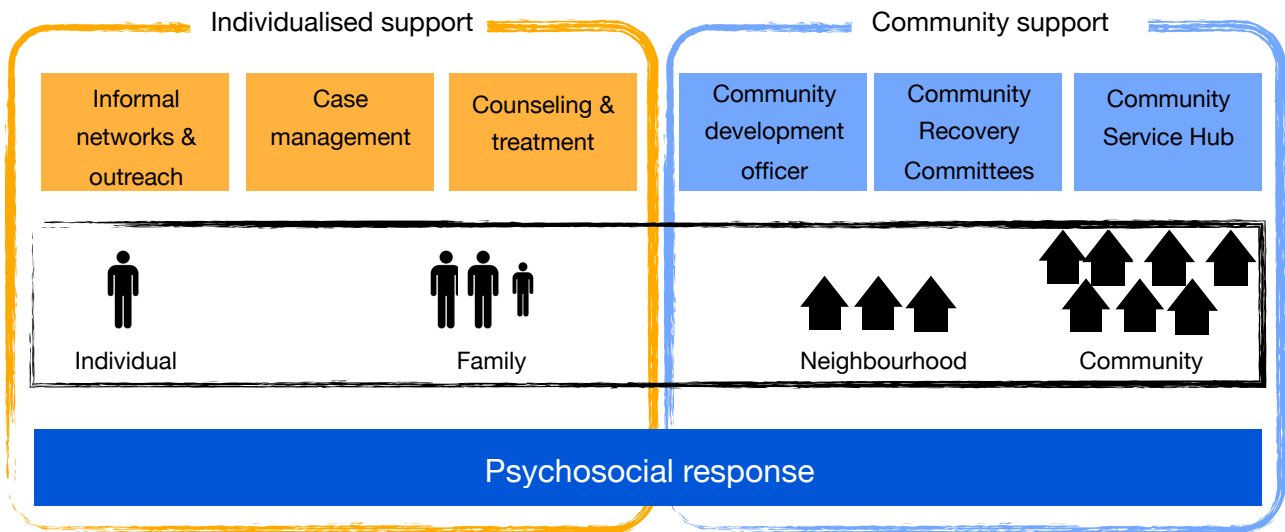
- ▶ Individual support for people and families- information, support, access to generic services and facilitating provision of specialist services; and
- ▶ A focus on communities- support for existing community agencies to identify and respond to the needs of their members in ways that promote recovery and social cohesion.

Building on the elements of individualised support and a focus on communities, the initiatives are put in place to aid the recovery process to empower individuals, enhance their capacity to identify changing needs of individuals and groups in affected communities and elsewhere, rebuilding the community and engaging the broader Victorian community. These strategies must be put in place for an extended period. The integration of these strategies into existing services will ensure smooth transitioning to mainstream services when needs diminish.

Literature suggests that the arts can and should play a key role in this model, by engaging both individuals and communities in creative activities that have benefits as part of the individual support stream as well as the community support stream.

The model for psychosocial recovery is shown in the following diagram.

Figure 2. Psychosocial model of support



This model follows the ‘umbrella of care’ proposed by B Raphael (1986) *When disaster strikes, How families and communities cope with disaster*. Sourced in Victorian Government Department of Human Services 2009, *After the bushfires*.

This model is reinforced in much of the literature that discusses successful approaches to disaster recovery. According to the Population Health Intervention Research Centre, University of Calgary, Canada, there are five essential elements of immediate and mid term trauma intervention. Along with the most fundamental principles that include safety and calming, *connectedness* is identified as being one of the essential five principles. This involves helping to keep individuals connected, providing opportunities for people to share stories together, and providing communal activities to nurture solidarity. (Hawke, P. 2009). Another of the five principles is hope. Hope is said to be achieved by, among other things, is building strengths that they have as individuals and communities.

It is widely acknowledged that the arts addresses both principles of connectedness and hope by providing activities in which communities can participate, and by giving individuals a feeling of purpose and achievement, feelings that can be transferred into other areas of their lives.

3. Program examples

The prevailing view amongst professionals and academics is that it is not appropriate to consider 'best practice' arts-based disaster recovery responses. Best-practice does not apply to disaster recovery initiatives because every disaster situation is unique and requires a tailored response. Additionally, knowledge, understanding and experience in this field is continually growing with each unique situation. It is more appropriate to consider the key elements that contribute to successful programs and initiatives, which may be able to be transferred to other situations where appropriate.

3.1 Australian disaster recovery arts programs

There have been a number of Australian projects in recent years designed to assist community rebuilding in direct response to a natural disaster, including the following.

PROGRAM	YEAR	FUNDING SOURCES	DESCRIPTION
MP3 Player Project	2009	Australian Red Cross	A program designed for young people who were affected by the 2009 Victorian bushfires. Red Cross created an MP3 player filled with helpful information about trauma recovery, interviews, music and messages. Young people are invited to share their music, thoughts and stories.
Youth Music Project	2009	Salvation Army	This project operated in 15 bushfire-affected areas in Victoria, providing high school students with a safe place to share stories and their emotions, through the use of music.
Bendigo Bushfire Recovery Initiative	2009	City of Greater Bendigo	Public events were staged in Bendigo following the 2009 Victorian bushfires to enable the local community to reconnect. The project involved more than 20 local artists and other local groups.
Victorian Bushfires Collection	2009	Museums Australia Victoria	Active collection of stories, images and objects that document the immediate impact of the bushfires, the community response, the aftermath and the process of recovery and renewal.
Illuminated by Fire	2010	Regional Arts Victoria	This project will take place over a period of 18 months across 11 regions throughout Victoria. Artists of all media will delve into the role of fire and its impact.
StoryBoard	2009	Regional Arts Victoria	A creative space for people to share photos, videos, artworks and stories with others who have been affected by the Victorian bushfires.

PROGRAM	YEAR	FUNDING SOURCES	DESCRIPTION
At the Coalface	2009	Regional Arts Victoria	A documentary film to trace the impact and value of an arts officer on the ground in the Shire of Murrindindi.
Marysville Big Screen	2009	Regional Arts Victoria	Providing a place for the community of Marysville to gather, share stories and participate in workshops to reflect on the 2009 bushfires.
Circus Oz	2009	Community Partnership Foundation Bendigo Bank	Circus toured through 17 primary schools, offering shows and workshops for children who were affected by the Victorian bushfires.

3.2 Critical success factors

It is not possible to directly apply one successful program or model to another disaster or emergency, as every situation is different. However, there are some critical success factors that are common to all of the programs that are considered successful. These are the things that are important to consider when responding to each unique disaster or emergency.

According to current thinking, the critical success factors for the arts to contribute positively to community rebuilding are the following:

- ▶ Involving communities in all aspects of decision making;
- ▶ Providing resources to enable release of community members to make time and take part;
- ▶ Recognising that different people are at different stages and that decisions about domestic reconstruction involve grief and take time;
- ▶ Recognising that strong communities are diverse in their activities, opportunities and people
- ▶ Diverse cultural roles and activities have to be restored (play is as important as work);
- ▶ Being proactive in particular settings (such as schools) with evidence-based approaches known to create a sense of safety and security;
- ▶ Consciously creating and building resources for recovery, be these physical, economic, social, psychological or spiritual;
- ▶ Continuous research-feedback-action loops must be in place to monitor progress and ensure all part of the community are reached.

4. Implementing the arts into disaster recovery responses

The Australian Journal of Emergency Management recognises that it is fundamental that disaster resilience is a collective responsibility of all sectors of society, who by working together will be more effective than any individual effort. A future challenge will be facilitating both 'bottom up' and high level engagement with this new policy imperative. The organisation recommends that Australia needs not only a new way of policy thinking, but new, compatible, policy approaches that integrate, rather than compete, with the existing policy priorities and emergency management arrangements. This is recognised as being the key challenge for those working in disaster resilience in the coming years.

It is widely acknowledged and strongly believed by many academics and professionals that the arts has an important role to play in contributing to disaster recovery. For this to be successful it will be crucial for the arts to be planned for, and written into disaster management policies across all tiers of government. The arts should not be used as a stand-alone activity that complements other forms of responses, but should be used as a tool within disaster recovery responses.

Lessons from evaluations such as this one should be considered and incorporated into government planning and documents.

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