

SUSTAINABLE HEALTH REVIEW

SUBMISSION FROM THE WA ARTS AND HEALTH CONSORTIUM

The WA Arts and Health Consortium welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Sustainable Health Review initiated by the McGowan Government. It is timely that a new government should seek to put in place a framework that will provide the best possible health service to the community in the most cost effective manner.

Keeping the Western Australian community healthy and maintaining its well-being will have a significant influence on any sustainable health service. The Consortium believes that the arts has a role to play in reducing the number of potential patients requiring costly hospital treatment as well as aiding recuperation for those with health issues.

A Report from the All Party Parliamentary Group inquiry (UK) *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*¹ released on 21 July 2017, has three key messages:

"The arts can help keep us well, aid our recovery and support longer lives better lived.

The arts can help meet major challenges facing health and social care: ageing, long-term conditions, loneliness and mental health.

The arts can help us save money in the health service and social care."

There is substantial evidence in Australia and internationally to support these statements. Previous [research](#) carried out by the Consortium has shown the efficacy of arts related activity in Western Australian hospitals in aiding recuperation.

However, the Consortium is mindful that evidence by itself does not lead to policy and action. What is required is a belief in a solution coupled with the political and institutional will to act on this belief.

Currently, arts and health activity is not underpinned by any strategic thinking, policy-making or regular resourcing and so is driven by individuals within the system rather than the Department.

The Consortium offers to:

- Contribute to the development of arts and health policy through cross-sector collaboration
- Initiate the development of arts and health projects that address ongoing challenges to health.

¹ *Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing*. Report from the All Party Parliamentary Group inquiry (UK) July 2017.

<http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>

One such example is 'Arts on Prescription' where people experiencing physical or psychological distress are referred or refer themselves to engage with the arts in their community. The UK studies have shown a reduction in the GP consultation rate and a reduction in hospital admissions.

HammondCare NSW is about to release a Report on its Arts on Prescription project involving older people living in the community. According to Professor Christopher Poulos, Head of Research and Aged Care Clinical Services, HammondCare, "the outcomes are very positive in that we achieved significant improvement in participants' wellbeing."

The above example is just one of many possible health care options that relate to arts and culture. The Consortium looks forward to the opportunity to contribute its knowledge and expertise to the State Government's journey towards a sustainable and patient-centric health service for Western Australians.

This journey will require innovative health policy, strategies, projects and partnerships (across government and non-government agencies) to assist positive health outcomes.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Deborah Pearson". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Deborah Pearson, Chair, WA Arts and Health Consortium

Friday 29 September 2017

About the WA Arts and Health Consortium

The National Arts and Health Framework was endorsed in May 2014 by Australia's Health Ministers and Cultural Ministers who acknowledged the role that the arts can play in providing improved health and wellbeing outcomes for all Australians.

<https://www.arts.gov.au/national-arts-and-health-framework>

In July 2014, St John of God Health Care (SJGHC) and the Chamber of Arts and Culture Western Australia co-hosted a seminar to explore opportunities to better integrate the arts into the delivery of health services in Western Australian hospitals.

An Arts and Health Consortium was then established for Western Australia with the purpose of seeking innovative, practical and sustainable ways to respond to the National Arts and Health Framework.

The Consortium consists of representatives from the public and private health services, health consumers, researchers, arts advocates and the government departments of Health and Culture and the Arts

Understanding that arts and health has a broad scope, the Consortium chose to focus their first research project to WA Hospitals. The project sought to map and measure the current level of engagement, support and investment by WA hospitals in Arts and Health activities in order to better understand the extent to which the arts are contributing to the delivery of health services in Western Australian (WA) hospitals and to the health and wellbeing of patients, their families, visitors and staff.

This first project was co-funded by the Health Department, Culture and the Arts, SJGHC, Chamber of Arts and Culture WA and Lotterywest.

The extensive research and analysis carried out provided invaluable insights into current and future arts activities in Western Australia hospitals.

<https://www.cacwa.org.au/advocacy-policy/submissions-research-and-reports>

It is gratifying to see the level of arts and health activity currently undertaken in hospital sites throughout the state. Clinicians and patients value it and there is evidence of proven health benefits. However it is of significant concern that most activity is project based and short term without any underpinning policy and strategic framework.

These findings are congruent with the 2016 NSW Department of Health examination of Arts and Health activity (broad scope) in NSW (see the [NSW Health and the Arts Taskforce](#) plus the [NSW Health and The Arts Framework](#) and the [Health and The Arts Exchange](#)) and more recently the UK Report from the All Party Parliamentary Group inquiry (UK) Creative Health: The Arts for Health and Wellbeing released on 21 July 2017. <http://www.artshealthandwellbeing.org.uk/appg-inquiry/>

The Consortium is currently focused on influencing further cross-sector collaboration, gathering a working group to develop an Arts on Prescription Pilot(s), sharing the research evidence on using the arts to teach medical students and health care professionals and fostering professional development for artists working in health contexts.