

Gender Equality Through the Arts *Program Evaluation*

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1 Executive summary

VicHealth aimed to use the power of art to raise awareness and promote gender equality and to celebrate women. It also wanted to build capacity by bringing artists and local councils together.

The project has demonstrated the effectiveness of a partnership model for promoting gender equality through the arts which allows for a localised implementation. Collectively, the projects funded by the GEARTS grants program have successfully promoted gender equality by:

- **raising awareness and discussion of gender inequality;**
- **providing new perspectives on gender roles;**
- **highlighting the strength, capability and contribution of women; and**
- **providing opportunities and role models for young women and women of marginalized groups.**

1.1 Background and Aims

VicHealth is mandated to promote good health and the prevention of disease. Given the burden of disease associated with violence against women, VicHealth has an ongoing commitment to the prevention of gendered violence. Its primary prevention strategies focus on gender equality and community attitudes towards women and violence and have targeted various settings such as sports, education and the workplace.

The Gender Equality through the Arts (GEARTS) Grants Program progresses this work to the arts setting. Art as a mechanism of raising awareness and working towards social change has a long history.

VicHealth aimed to use the power of art to raise awareness and promote gender equality and to celebrate women. It also wanted to build capacity by bringing artists and local councils together. Therefore, VicHealth invited Victorian Councils to partner with artists or art/creative industries organisations to apply for funding to support the creation of ART initiatives that promote gender equality. This work is timely, given the recently enacted Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic), in which local government has been recognised as a key setting with a duty to promote gender equality due to the significant and direct influence of Council policies, programs, and services on the community.

The goals of the VicHealth GEARTS Grants Program were to support Councils and their partners and communities with the development of creative arts initiatives that:

- Raise awareness, engage with and progress contemporary ideas about gender equality and the gendered drivers of violence against women,
- Celebrate and promote Victorian women and girls as independent leaders, and as equal, capable, and valued members of the community,
- Improve the social connection, resilience and mental wellbeing of participants, and their sense of safety in their communities,
- Increase the capacity of Local Government to build partnerships with arts and corporate organisations to act on gender equality using the arts, and
- Build the evidence base on what works in the arts to promote gender equality for mental wellbeing.

1.2 The projects

Seven local Council projects were funded under the grants scheme. Projects commenced in mid 2019 for a 12-month period, which was extended by six months in response to limitations associated with Covid 19 social distancing and lockdown requirements. Grant recipients were required to develop initiatives that would incorporate at least one of the following strategies to address the gendered drivers of violence against women:

- Challenging gender stereotypes and roles;
- Strengthening positive, equal and respectful relationships;
- Promoting women's independence and decision making; and
- Challenging the condoning of violence against women.

Female Futures

City of Melbourne, through its SIGNAL creative studio for young people aged 13 to 25 and workshops at The Drum, engaged with professional artists to deliver short film and sound workshops to young women and non-binary people. Their aim was to empower and inspire their young participants in creative and technical roles and to creatively explore what a world without gender inequality would look like. Through the female futures website, films and on-line panel discussions young women were given the opportunity to tell their stories as well as stories of other creative women and were exposed to role models that break down gendered stereotypes.

Art for a Better Democracy

City of Bayside, in partnership with well-known artist Ponch Hawkes, aimed to raise awareness of the low representation of women in local government and encourage more women to participate in local democracy through a creative incursion into Bayside's local government gender narrative. Provocative portraits of local women wearing fake moustaches replaced the predominantly male portraits in council chambers as part of the Changing Faces Exhibition. A digital catalogue of the exhibition along with a video were produced and made available online. A workshop was later held to support women to run for Council.

Gender Equality Game Jam

City of Port Phillip partnered with Girl Geek Academy and Star Health to engage the games community to address the gendered drivers of violence against women. The Gender Equality Game Jam was a weekend event where young gamers gathered at The Arcade to produce 11 games with the theme of gender equality. These were displayed at the Penny Arcade Expo (PAX) Australia 2019, the largest gaming forum in the Southern hemisphere, and continue to be hosted for free on partner organisations' websites. This project not only promoted gender equality in the themes of the game, the initiative provided opportunities for female gamers in a male dominated sphere.



Reclaim the Lanes: Girls Own Space

South Gippsland Shire developed projects in four regional towns across the shire to empower young women in their sense of place and decision making. In each town, a space was chosen to be transformed through an artistic project co-designed and co-delivered through workshops with local young women and facilitating artists. This project aimed to encourage women and girls to feel more secure and safe in these public places by encouraging a process of reclaiming and a sense of ownership and belonging. Enhanced social connection of the young participants and opportunities for emerging local artists were strengths of this project.

Framed by Gender

City of Knox partnered with Anna Farago and The Hotham Street Ladies to challenge gender assumptions, disrupt gender stereotypes and positively reframe ideas around gender equality through art installations, events, and workshops. The community and the artists both contributed to some of the art installations displayed in a local shopping mall and a local library. Boronia high school students engaged with gender equality issues while contributing to the artworks.

Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal women of the Yarra Ranges

Yarra Ranges Council aimed to find, explore, celebrate and repeat the stories of Aboriginal women who have shaped the local community in the past, their descendants and women leaders in the contemporary Aboriginal community of Yarra Ranges. Jewellery making workshops were provided as a platform for participants to share their stories of strong Aboriginal women. Members of the community were invited to contribute creative writing, biographies, photos and dedications that were published in book form to raise awareness of the strength and contribution of Aboriginal women to the community.

The Empathy Project

The City of Yarra partnered with Musical Sprouts artists to develop a musical theatre show and accompanying workshops for children aged 2–8 that explored emotions from a non-gendered standpoint to challenge gendered stereotypes. This project aimed to build skills in emotional literacy, self-regulation, and empathy as a foundation for respectful relationships and gender equality. A video of the production and educational resources have subsequently been produced to continue promoting gender equality.

1.3 Methodology

A collaborative, participatory approach and a multi-case study method was taken to evaluate the GEARTS Grants Program. Consultation and support were provided to each of the seven projects to conduct their own individual evaluations, which formed case studies. This quantitative and qualitative data was supplemented by interviews conducted by the evaluation team with 9 council project officers and 11 artists across the projects. Thematic analysis was used to explore processes that facilitate successful project implementation and associated outcomes.

1.4 Findings

Collectively, the seven diverse projects funded by the GEARTS grants program have promoted gender equality by raising awareness of gender inequality; providing new perspectives on gender roles; highlighting the strength, capability and contribution of women; and providing opportunities and role models for young women and women of marginalized groups. Audience feedback demonstrated that the projects were enjoyable, educational, raised awareness and generated discussion about gender inequality. The projects raised the visibility of women and were experienced as inspiring. Community members who participated in the projects reported increases in social connection, feelings of empowerment and gender equality beliefs.

Empowerment was identified as a major outcome and theme represented in all sources of data. This included empowerment of participants as well as artists and project officers involved in the implementation and delivery of projects. The power of the projects to generate discussion about gender equality and the role of women was noteworthy. Not surprisingly, however, many projects were also subject to backlash. This took two major forms: denial of gender inequality and attempts to protect the privileged position of men; and censorship when the gender equality messaging of the art was considered too confronting.

Strong partnerships between Council and artists or art organisations were vital to project success, particularly when overcoming obstacles presented by backlash. Effective communication, drawing on complementary skills and advocacy for the projects were identified as essential partnership processes. Project reach was enhanced by effective use of media and engaging with community.

1.5 Conclusion

The potential for local government to promote gender equality through arts-based initiatives was evident. Art has the power to illuminate inequities, generate discussion, give voice to and empower women, and motivate community action. The role of Council is to provide the necessary support, resources and expertise to maximise the success of partnerships. Council can contribute to project success by the provision of strong female leadership and support for gender equality in general, expertise in supporting arts-based initiatives and community engagement, and the use of the media to raise awareness of the projects and promote their gender equality messages. It is also important that Council plays a role in ensuring the sustainability of the artworks and the gender equality messages they convey beyond project duration.



1.6 Recommendations

The following recommendations are presented to inform future initiatives according to the various project roles.

Funders

- The model used by VicHealth where Councils partnered with artists/art organisations to develop unique projects was successful in providing the partnerships with substantial local discretion in designing their projects. This model was effective in producing a diverse range of innovative projects that were both public facing and participant focussed and, for the most part, responded to the unique needs and characteristics of their communities. Future projects should similarly be encouraged to design unique projects that are appropriate for their local community.
- Community of Practice workshops were well attended and received positive feedback reinforcing the need for this form of support. Professional and peer support and shared learning is strongly recommended for those working on Gender Equality and Arts initiatives. Funders should consider providing opportunities for Communities of Practice to enable partners to build their capacity in delivering gender equality messages and responding to resistance to gender equality initiatives, share experiences and resources, and provide collegial support.
- Funders should provide resources to prepare partnerships for potential resistance and backlash. This could include workshop funding to develop the project rationale, ensuring it articulates the way the artwork messaging or project activities meet the overarching aims. This can inform subsequent strategies to manage backlash. In addition, support for the experience of backlash during the life of the project is required, in particular for more aggressive forms of backlash. Community of practice workshops provide a forum for teams to safely discuss problems and solutions. Some projects may also benefit from individual support.
- Funders should ensure project proposals consider how the gender equality message of the artwork can be extended beyond the life of the project.

Local Council (or other organisation responsible for leading the project)

- Council should ensure project teams are multidisciplinary, wherever possible, to maximise the effectiveness of complementary skills such as expertise in community engagement, gender equality and the arts. Consider partnering with external organisations to augment gender equality expertise. It is also beneficial for the team to include representation of the target community, particularly for intercultural projects.
- Project teams should have the full support of other relevant council departments, especially media and public relations.
- Advocacy is an important element of project success, especially in response to resistance and backlash. Ideally there should be strong and continued support for the project within Council management as well as from Councillors. Such support from project “champions” should strive to enhance connections within Council and build external relationships and support for the project to ensure the momentum for change extends beyond the life of the project.
- Council could consider various levels and forms of community engagement to enhance community relevance and ownership. This could range from community consultation in project development, to involvement in various stages of implementation to full responsibility for the entire project.
- Consider the naming of projects and the representation of diversity in the naming process to foster inclusivity for marginalised groups, specifically the use of non-gendered language to foster inclusion for transgender women and non-binary people. Gender exclusive language has been found to contribute to group-based ostracism and thus should be avoided where possible or used selectively as relevant to the intended audience (Stout & Dasgupta, 2011).

- Local councils should be prepared to maximise the effectiveness of projects by garnishing the momentum created by projects and carrying it forward in subsequent initiatives. For example, the relationships formed with community groups and organisations should be continued with future plans for additional gender equality collaborative action.
 - Follow up on the learnings from workshops within partnerships such as those with schools and community groups to continue to reinforce the language and ideas raised in the workshops and provide resources for partners to continue promoting gender equality.
 - Opportunities to use the artworks to deliver the GE message beyond the initial project should be built into the project plan and pursued after project completion.
 - Councils could consider creating projects archives on public facing websites.

Partnerships

- Partnerships between Council and artists/ art organisations provide an effective setting for gender equality work. The inclusion of external organisations and community groups can enhance the scope and effectiveness of projects.
- Ensure all those involved in the partnership are prepared for experiencing and managing resistance and potential backlash. This is especially pertinent if the artwork is likely to be perceived as controversial or confronting, such as portraying the predatory nature of some men. In such cases, it may be useful to pilot the project, seeking feedback to inform the final implementation.
- Invest time in early partnership establishment for all parties to establish common goals and to understand each other's expectations and limitations. This is particularly important if there are potential conflicts of interest. Partners should be prepared to troubleshoot potential areas of conflict as soon as possible so that projects do not get derailed, especially in response to resistance and backlash. See the Partnership Analysis Tool (VicHealth, 2016).
- Engage advocates for social change that strengthen the collaborative partnerships and provide opportunities to empower individuals as well as the wider community to mobilise change.

Project teams

- Good communication and skill sharing were elements of successful project teams and partnerships. Teams should ensure artists are kept well informed, especially when new artists are brought into projects or staff changes occur within teams. Skill-building and networking opportunities for artists, especially solo artists will increase capacity and perceived support as well as facilitate project success. All staff working with specific target groups will benefit from the provision of opportunities to enhance cultural sensitivity (e.g., working with young people, people with disability, and people from specific ethnic groups).
- A multi-platform approach to include online as well as face-to-face engagement is recommended to encourage wider engagement and allow a more flexible approach to participation.
- Cultural safety, responsiveness and representation along with the provision of a female/non-binary space were found to facilitate discussion of gender equality and the critical examination of gender roles. Female artists from a similar ethnic background to workshop participants provided empowering role models. Future projects should seek to create safe spaces with the inclusion of female / non-binary team members and cultural representation in workshop facilitation, to ensure all voices are empowered.
- Strong female leadership was a feature of most projects and is recommended for future projects. However, men's involvement in gender equality work should not be discouraged; they can be powerful advocates and bring many skills to a project. Previous research has noted care needs to be taken to ensure gendered power relations are not recreated when men are working alongside women (Seymour, 2017).



- Prepare strategies and resources well in advance to respond to backlash and criticism. Be prepared for critical or aggressive emails.
 - The use of a project specific email address rather than individual staff member emails is recommended to share the load of responding, remove the sense of individual targeting, and decrease associated stress. Prepared responses can be used as determined by the team to reduce personal impact. See (En)countering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives (VicHealth, 2018)
 - Art installations that are not staffed could provide additional information, perhaps in the form of signage that provides the context of the artwork and the aims of the project. See Framing gender equality – Message guide (VicHealth, 2021) for ways to frame messages that are appropriate for a persuadable audience.
 - Projects that involve workshops with participants should ensure participants understand the project aims and the ways in which the artworks or activities address those aims.

Artists and creative industries

- Artists should endeavour to participate in community of practice sessions and early planning stages of projects as much as possible to maximise understanding of the project goals and ensure a shared vision for the artwork.
 - Artists who are employed during project implementation for specific aspects of the project such as workshop facilitation should ensure they are fully informed about the project and its goals and seek the information and support they need to successfully complete their work.
- Artists should be prepared for the experience of backlash, work collaboratively with partners to seek solutions if it occurs and potentially destabilises the project, and seek support from partners if it is experienced as stressful.
- Although not essential to project success, those artists who worked with other artists noted the benefits in terms of providing support, mitigating stress and utilising complementary skills. If feasible, artists should consider partnering with other artists.

2 Background



The VicHealth Gender Equality through the Arts (GEARTS) program funded local government Councils (hereafter, Councils) to partner with arts and creative industries organisations to deliver arts-based projects that promote gender equality and raise awareness of the harms associated with gender inequality.

The goals of the VicHealth GEARTS program were to support Councils and their partners and communities with the development of creative arts initiatives that:

- Raise awareness, engage with and progress contemporary ideas about gender equality and the gendered drivers of violence against women,
- Celebrate and promote Victorian women and girls as independent leaders, and as equal, capable, and valued members of the community,
- Improve the social connection, resilience and mental wellbeing of participants, and their sense of safety in their communities,
- Increase the capacity of Local Government to build partnerships with arts and corporate organisations to act on gender equality using the arts, and
- Build the evidence base on what works in the arts to promote gender equality for mental wellbeing.

Seven local Council projects were funded under the grants scheme. For clarity, we refer to the seven individual initiatives as projects and the overall funding scheme as the program.

Victoria University was commissioned to provide evaluation services to support the GEARTS program on two levels: the provision of direct support and resources to each of the seven funded projects to increase their capacity to evaluate their initiatives; and the evaluation of the overall GEARTS program. This document presents the GEARTS program evaluation. The evaluation aim was to produce understanding and evaluation of project impact and processes that are useful to stakeholders and VicHealth to contribute to building the evidence on arts-based gender equality programs with the long-term goal of increasing gender equality and wellbeing outcomes of women. It explores the processes through which the collective efforts of the GEARTS program promote attitudinal change and raise awareness of gender inequality and its impact.

The report describes the unique aims, characteristics and activities of each project and summarises the findings from the individual projects, drawing on the quantitative data related to impacts, and qualitative data related to participant experience and project processes, as reported by the projects. In addition, the evaluation team collected qualitative data across the projects in the form of in-depth interviews with Council and artist representatives. The report includes Victoria University's findings of the overall cross-case analysis. The seven projects had diverse participant groups and target audiences, incorporated various art forms and targeted different gender equality messages. The cross-case analysis sought to collectively examine the possibilities, challenges and outcomes of these unique gender equality Arts initiatives to gain an understanding of what works in gender equality promotion through the Arts.

3 Literature Review



3.1 Violence against women

Violence against women (VAW) occurs within a socio-political context where women are disadvantaged by unequal access to resources and the perpetuation of a power differential that suppresses the needs and rights of women (United Nations General Assembly, 1993).

Violence against women (VAW) is recognised as both a serious human rights abuse and a social problem that demands urgent attention from both governments and communities (World Health Organization [WHO], 2019). VAW is defined as “any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life” (United Nations [UN], 1993, p.1).

It is recognised that changing community attitudes to address the key drivers of VAW plays an essential role in the prevention of violence. Such drivers of VAW include condoning of gendered violence, men’s control of decision making, adherence to rigid gender roles, and male peer relations that are disrespectful of women (Our Watch, ANROWS, VicHealth, 2015). Underlying these drivers are community attitudes and practices that subjugate women. Thus, initiatives that promote gender equality are paramount in preventing VAW and promoting the health and wellbeing of women.

There has been increasing focus by government in recent years on the primary prevention of violence against women (Council of Australian Governments, 2014; Victorian Government, 2017), and of the underlying ideologies of gender inequality as in the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic). In the Gender Equality Act 2020 (Vic), local government has been recognised as a key setting with a duty to promote gender equality due to the significant and direct influence of Council policies, programs, and services on the community.

VicHealth works in partnership with organisations, communities, and individuals to make health a central part of our daily lives. VicHealth has had a long and committed history in the promotion of women’s health and the prevention of violence against women. VicHealth’s commitment to addressing gender inequality not only contributes to the prevention of violence against women, but also promotes safety, dignity, respect, and fairness for everyone in the community (Gender Equality Act, 2020). With a range of successful gender equality investments to improve health outcomes for women in settings and sectors including education, sports, workplaces, government, and the media, one of their next identified areas of investment is the arts setting.

3.2 Arts for Social Change

The promotion of gender equality has been key in addressing the structural and underlying causes of VAW as this violence is a manifestation of historically unequal power relations between men and women (Harris et al., 2015; Our Watch, 2020; Redding et al., 2017; Rosen et al., 2003; UN, 2013; WHO, 2019). Despite significant changes occurring over the last century in the western world, gender inequality is still a significant problem affecting the health and wellbeing of women. Social change directed at these inequalities can occur if there is continuous effort and small successes are built upon (Harris et al., 2015; Our Watch, 2020; Redding et al., 2017; Rosen et al., 2003; UN, 2013; WHO, 2019). Through deconstructing gender stereotypes and promoting equal value, it is suggested that social change can be achieved through external methods such as the use of social policy and can also be built from within through the engagement of those at the community level. Social actors who can embody the social change message using art encourage an internal change within the audience or viewer that provides something sharable, raising awareness and thereby spreading the message through the audience's own learning (Oliveira, 2014).

The value of 'the arts' as a powerful tool to promote social justice, whether this is in the form of painting, poetry, dance or other forms, is that it encourages people to imagine a different world. For example, engagement in arts can inspire intentional processes of envisaging what a feminist future could look and feel like, in addition to supporting us to continue to collectively organise for justice and encouraging others to join our struggles (Serra et al., 2017).

These concepts align with empowerment theory traditions which advocate that people are required to take an active role in their own transformation and take action to gain greater control over their lives and have equitable access to material and symbolic resources for this to occur. Empowerment has been conceptualised as being:

an intentional ongoing process centered in the local community, involving mutual respect, critical reflection, caring, and group participation through which people lacking in equal share of valued resources gain greater access to and control over those resources (Cornell Empowerment Group, 1989, p. 1, as cited in Fetterman, 2017).

This is supported by Greene (1995) who argues that through 'the arts', one can learn to imagine possibilities of social change, to "look at things as if they could be otherwise" (p. 19) and further Oliveira (2014) claims social change directed at gender inequalities can occur if there is a continuous effort and that small successes are built upon. Oliveira (2014) suggests the use of the arts to encourage an internal change within the audience or viewer, providing something sharable, raising awareness and thereby extending the message through the audiences' own learning.

There has been increasing recognition over recent decades of using the arts for social change as a means of consciousness-raising in communities. Providing a climate that allows the audience to be challenged intellectually, thus provoking thought and immersing the audience in other people's perspectives, particularly those that are oppressed, discriminated against and marginalised, offers the audience the scope to take on another's viewpoint (Blanckenberg & McEwen, 2014; Mulvey & Mandell, 2007; Oliveira, 2014; Serra, et al., 2017; Whittaker, 1993).

Some have argued that art is a powerful means for social change. The term Artivism for example has been coined to capture the interface of arts and activism, where the role of artists as activists can alter peoples' world views and create agenda for change, shift narratives and challenge the status quo" (Serra et al., 2017, p.109). This concept has been widely used in social change campaigns ranging from gender inequality (Msimanga, & Nijenhuis, 2017), violence against LGBTI+ (Rhoades, 2012), and political activism in authoritarian contexts (Wang & Liu, 2020).

An example of an artivism project in the arena of VAW is in South Africa (SA) which highlighted the plight of rape-survivors left traumatised and abandoned by society. The art installation 'SA's Dirty Laundry' consisted of rows of clothesline with 3600 pairs of underwear hung in highly visible public spaces in Johannesburg stimulating dialogue within the community. Against a background climate of "gender inequality and patriarchal dominance that results in the terror of violence against women and children" (Msimanga, & Nijenhuis, 2017, p.51), through the lens of feminism, the artists are motivated to identify the unequal and gendered power relations and seeks to rectify this inequality.

Another activism project, again in South Africa, was a multi-media exhibition of the lives and struggles of the LGBTI+ community which set to challenge gender norms and gender-based violence through sharing lived experiences. These people and their communities suffer “discrimination, exclusion, violence, harassment, and even death, because of their gender expressions, sexual orientations, and who they love” (Blanckenberg & McEwen, 2014, p.61). The artists aimed to raise the awareness of the audience about contested issues in an inclusive manner by asking them to comment on the exhibition, which promoted a wide range of emotions from anger to sadness. Thus, art not only represents ideas and experiences, but it also has the power to transform those who engage or participate in it (Green & Sonn, 2008; Sonn, Smith, & Meyer, 2015; Maxwell & Sonn, 2020). The concept of conscientisation is linked to Paolo Freire’s critical pedagogy and is a central practice in the field of liberation psychology (Montero, 2009, p.74). Conscientisation entails reflecting on who we are as individuals and the groups we belong to, thus allowing a different understanding, and giving a sense of our place in society and our associated privileges (Montero, 2009). This intersection of education and emotion reveals conscientisation can interrupt and challenge the dominant ways of thinking about gender diversity and stimulate social change more broadly (Blanckenberg & McEwen, 2014).



These examples of arts for activist purposes show that artists can play a vital role in social change initiatives in the field of gender equality and how attitudes and drivers of gender equality can be altered through conscientisation. While there is a growing focus on arts for social change, a recent review commissioned by VicHealth (MacNeill et al., 2018) suggested that there is limited research that has reported on specific factors that successfully promote social change in gender equity. The report suggests that certain program characteristics tend to enhance the potential effectiveness of arts-based gender equality initiatives. These *promising practice principles* include:

1. capacity to engender understanding and empathy regarding inequities and discrimination experienced by women
2. capacity to disrupt gender stereotyping
3. uncovering untold women’s stories of our past, present and futures
4. shining a light on potentially unhealthy and unsafe cultures or environments (e.g., heavily male dominated sporting clubs, workplaces)
5. validating self and collective expressions by creating visibility of women in public spaces
6. potential for scalability
7. potential for added value through opportunity, publicity, prominence and partnership
8. capacity to evaluate and contribute to an emerging evidence base

Therefore, as well as evaluating the outcomes and experiences of those involved in the GEARTS projects, the current evaluation sought to explore the use of promising practice principles employed by grant recipients in achieving project aims.

3.3 Collaboration for social change

To broaden the artists' message of social change to the wider community there has been an increasing focus on partnering with organisations that have resources and expertise to manage these programs. Most of these partnerships have been between university researchers and artists and the wider communities. Key factors that enabled the success and sustainability of partnerships include efforts at the outset to agree upon clear and open communication, mutual respect and trust, fostering shared learning as well as reflexive dialogue for managing any disagreements that may arise (Kilmer & Cook, 2020; Nathan, 2015; Nichols, et al., 2015; Ospina, & Foldy, 2010; Serig & Hinojosa, 2016; Yassi et al., 2016). Yassi et al., (2016) noted barriers in arts for social change partnerships included, stifling the artist's creative process and ultimately the message.

Researchers have explored how a partnership model can work effectively with university and community-based partnerships (Andrews et al., 2010). They developed a framework suggesting important antecedents to a partnership, including mutual interest, and that the success of partnerships hinged on three factors. First, the 'goodness of fit' of partners which entailed shared values and commitment to the cause. Second, 'operations' describing the qualities of good communication and conflict resolution skills and, third, 'capacity', whereby the partnership needed to be inclusive and adequately resourced as well as having effective leadership. Using this partnership model, the researchers were able to define outcomes and provision of sustainable partnerships, mutual growth, and the long-term social health impact on the community. This framework, though used in the context of health, is worthy of note when considering how to examine partnerships between government organisations and artists.

A further study on sustaining partnerships by Jeanneret and Brown (2012) explored how a Local Council in Melbourne collaborated with the Melbourne Symphony Orchestra. The goal of the partnership was to provide workshops for disadvantaged children who have limited access to art or music programs as well as to promote community development opportunities and well-being through 'social connectedness'. The authors investigated how this partnership could be sustained beyond the initial funding program and found that including advocates who actively promoted and supported the partnerships increased their effectiveness and sustainability. Challenges arose when these advocates discontinued their role in a project with the knowledge and advocacy not passing to the replacement. This example is one of the few that looks at the gap in research on partnerships between Council organisations and artists. Accordingly, this evaluation collectively also explores factors that affect the success of the seven partnerships of the GEARTS program.

3.4 Evaluating the Gender Equality through the Arts program

The goals of the GEARTS program were to support Councils and their partners and communities with the development of creative arts initiatives. VicHealth engaged Victoria University to design and undertake an evaluation of GEARTS program. Victoria University has worked alongside VicHealth and the Local Government led GEARTS grant recipients and their project partners as they designed and delivered their respective initiatives. Seven individual projects have been funded by VicHealth.

Victoria University has undertaken a holistic evaluation across the projects within the GEARTS program to provide VicHealth with an understanding of what works to promote gender equality through the arts within the Victorian context.

4 Methodology



4.1 Participatory collaborative approach to evaluation

This section provides an overview of the evaluation methodology. Please see Appendix A for a more comprehensive description. The overall framework for the evaluation was informed by a participatory, collaborative approach to the evaluation where evaluators work in collaboration with partners to facilitate and support participants in owning and understanding the evaluation process.

The approach incorporates stakeholders' perspectives (Patton, 2002) and facilitates stakeholder 'buy-in' (Núñez, & Úcar, 2013). In this regard, it also uses elements of an empowerment evaluation approach (Fetterman, 2017). A participatory approach establishes a framework for dialogue and discussion between all parties (Zuñiga, 2000). Trust, respect and recognition of the organization and community members are key elements (Suarez-Balcazar et al., 2003) to ensure the needs and expectations of all stakeholders are included. Those involved in the evaluative process "learn from the process itself and make changes in the evaluated program or their practices on the basis of the evaluative process" (Jacob, Ouvrard, & Bélanger, 2011, p.114). External experts become collaborators and play a facilitating role in partnership with the community or program staff, using the local expertise in each community to collaboratively decide how the evaluation will be conducted.

Collaboration included: an initial meeting between VicHealth stakeholders and the Victoria University evaluation team to facilitate a shared understanding of the evaluation needs; regular meetings throughout the duration of the GEARTS program between the evaluation lead researcher and VicHealth project manager; and

working closely with the individual project teams, commencing with participation in the community of practice sessions hosted by VicHealth.

4.2 Multi-case study design

A mixed-methods, multi-case study design was chosen to evaluate the GEARTS program (Stake, 1994). Case study research focuses on understanding all there is to learn from and about a particular case or cases (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009). The case study approach is appropriate for this evaluation because it seeks to understand how the Arts can be used to raise awareness of gender inequality and the ways in which the social connection and wellbeing of participants is enhanced by their involvement in the projects. Each individual arts project formed a case.

Mixed-methods design involves the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to enhance the depth and breadth of information collected from each case. Project grant recipients were responsible for the evaluation of their projects under their funding agreements. With support from the evaluation team, they collected quantitative data related to outcomes, and qualitative data related to participant experiences. Data collection depended on each project's characteristics.

Some projects had relatively high numbers of participants with short-term engagement and others had several smaller groups participating in various workshops over a longer time. Therefore, the sources and type of data available to each project varied. Table 1 summarises the types of data collected by each project.

Table 1 Project and Data Sources

Council	Project	Participant Quantitative	Participant Qualitative	Audience
City of Melbourne	Female Futures	Pre – post Questionnaire (20*)	Post workshops survey with open-ended questions. Two hour reflection session (film workshop series)	Three items from Arts Experience Survey (30) posted to Female Futures website. Creatives Forum on-line survey with comments
Bayside City	Art for a Better Democracy	Pre – post Questionnaire (39*) Arts Experience Survey (158)	Interviews or focus groups (29)	Social media and website engagement
City of Port Phillip	Gender Equality Game Jam	Pre – post Questionnaire (22*)	Post events survey with open ended questions (27). Vox pops interviews	Arts Experience Survey (19) with comments
South Gippsland Shire	Girls Own Space	Arts Experience Survey (11)	Video interviews (44 workshop participants)	Social media public commentary
Knox City	Framed by Gender	Post only Questionnaire (44)		Social media public commentary
Yarra Ranges	Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges	Post only Questionnaire (31)	Survey with open-ended questions following completion of publication (24)	NA. (due to unavoidable delays, data was reported prior to public release of the Balit Bagurrk book)
City of Yarra	The Empathy Project	Pre – post Questionnaire (7*)	Post workshop survey with open-ended questions.	Qualitative audience feedback from parents and school teachers. Feedback (collected by project from show audience)

Note: Total number of respondents are shown in brackets.

* Total number of participants with a Pre and Post workshop response

A reporting template was provided for each project to produce its own evaluation report. These de-identified, collated findings were then shared with the evaluation team to inform the overall evaluation of the GEARTS grant program.

4.3 Measures

In consultation with VicHealth, and after feedback from the project teams, a number of measures were sourced for use by the projects. These included impact measures to assess levels of change in targeted attitudes and social connection of those who participated in the projects across time. This was then augmented by the findings of any qualitative investigation undertaken by each project to understand participant or audience experience of the arts projects. A post-event survey was used to collect audience reactions where applicable. Each project opted to use some or all the audience and participant measures based on their understanding of what was appropriate for their participant cohort and some added their own specific questions based on the unique aim and characteristics of their projects. Project reach statistics were also collated and included live audience numbers, website data, social media statistics and other evidence of media coverage. The following measures were available to each project:

- The ten item Arts Experience Survey was adapted from the Erie Arts and Culture, Cultural Experience Questionnaire (<https://www.erieartsandculture.org/blog/cultivating-meaningful-cultural-experiences>). It was modified to focus on the gender equality message of the arts experience rather than a general cultural experience. The survey contains ten items scored on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with a higher score reflecting stronger agreement with each item (See Appendix B).
- The social connection measure was a single-item measurement provided by VicHealth with the statement, “When I engage in community activities, I feel a strong sense of connection with the people I spend time with.” Project participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with this statement using a six-point Likert (Appendix C).

- There was also a project specific social connection measure that VicHealth requested each project to collect. The single item was “When I engaged in [each project inserted the specific project activity, e.g., the GE Game Jam], I felt a strong sense of connection with the people I spent time with.” It was administered after the project activity (See Appendix D).
- The four-item community empowerment measure was adapted from two measures from Cohen (2006) and Petersen et al., (2011) to measure participants’ beliefs about their sense of agency within their communities. (See Appendix E).
- The five-item gender equality beliefs measure was adapted from the Preventing Violence Against Women (PVAW) efficacy scale (Flood, 2018) to measure participants understanding, concern and confidence in promoting gender equality (See Appendix F).

4.4 Additional qualitative data

In addition to the data collected and collated by each project team, qualitative data was collected by the Victoria University research team, via conversational semi-structured interviews with Council project officers and artist partners involved in the design, implementation, and delivery of the projects. A total of nine interviews with Council project officers were conducted from the seven Councils, including eight females and one male. Eleven female artists involved in the seven projects were interviewed. This data was augmented with written reflections reported by the partners about their experiences of working in the projects. Thematic analysis was used to understand experiences of collaboration and participation in partnerships, and to gain a deeper understanding of mechanisms of change across the case studies. In particular, the factors that contribute to a successful partnership between the local government grant recipients and the arts and creative industries they partnered with were investigated. Partners’ perceptions of project outcomes and the experiences of the participants who engaged in the project activities were also explored.

5 GEARTS Projects



Grant recipients were required to develop initiatives that would incorporate at least one of the following strategies to address the gendered drivers of violence against women:

- Challenging gender stereotypes and roles;
- Strengthening positive, equal and respectful relationships;
- Promoting women’s independence and decision making; and
- Challenging the condoning of violence against women.

The alignment of project aims to the targeted strategies is summarised in Table 2. No project aimed to directly challenge the condoning of violence against women.

Table 2 Project aims in the context of drivers of violence against women

Project	Challenge gender stereotypes and roles	Strengthen positive, equal, and respectful relationships	Promote women’s independence
City of Melbourne – Female Futures	To identify and overcome barriers for participation for young women from CALD backgrounds.	To empower young women and female identifying people in creative and technical roles to explore what a world without gender inequality would look like.	To facilitate the co-creation of artworks that foster young women’s independence through art making.
Bayside City – Art for a Better Democracy	To increase awareness of the gender inequality in Bayside’s past and current democratic representation.	To encourage community participation in disrupting and challenging the gender narrative in Bayside’s democratic representation.	To increase female participation in local democracy.
City of Port Phillip – Gender Equality Game Jam	To challenge gender stereotypes and roles within games industry and to consider how games can be used to inform broader community.	To generate understanding and empathy broadly through public display and free, online access to the games.	To educate games arts practitioners on gender equality domains.

Project	Challenge gender stereotypes and roles	Strengthen positive, equal, and respectful relationships	Promote women's independence
South Gippsland Shire – Girls Own Space		To expose young regional women and our broader community to a high-quality arts experience with professional artists/ mentoring and building the capacity of our local artists to deliver in this space.	To provide the opportunity, space & platform for young regional women to physically mark their presence in their local environment – increased visibility of women themselves and of gender equality issues broadly.
Knox City – Framed By Gender	To disrupt, explore and positively reframe notions of gender equality.	To explore gender stereotypes and roles, the strengthening of positive, equal, and respectful relationships.	To promote women's independence and decision making.
Yarra Ranges – Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges.	To address gender inequality by questioning dominant narratives.	To find, explore, celebrate, create awareness, and repeat the stories of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women who have shaped the local community in the past, their descendants, and women leaders in the contemporary Aboriginal community of Yarra Ranges.	To build knowledge of these women within and outside their own community, shift the historical narrative to include them and provide more inspiration for emerging female leaders.
City of Yarra – The Empathy Project	To focus on the universal nature of feelings, and the awareness that comes from acknowledging and naming feelings.	To explore empathy in young children, and how by having the opportunity to step into the shoes of the other, we can build respectful relationships and gender equity into education.	

Each of the seven projects conducted its own evaluation, drawing on and adapting resources provided by the evaluation team. They collected data from participants and feedback from audiences, along with collating evidence of project reach. This section summarises the findings from each of the projects as reported to the evaluation team.

5.1 City of Melbourne – Female Futures



Images from film workshop

Project Description

The City of Melbourne, Female Futures project is a Signal project that empowers and upskills young women and non-binary young people as arts leaders in their community. Gender equality messaging was delivered through the creation of short films and podcasts produced by program participants.

Signal is the City of Melbourne's creative studio for young people 13 to 25 years. The project worked with young women and non-binary people, who live in or 'hang out' in the City of Melbourne, and professional artists to creatively explore gender equality through the making of short films and sound works.

Summer Shorts are short films that young people made with filmmakers Kate Lefoe and Hannah Moore as part of Signal Summer, an eight-day intensive program attended by twenty participants.

Twenty-nine young people worked with Hannah Moore to make a collective film highlighting the creativity of female artists exhibited in Female Futures Creatives.

PROJECT AIMS

- To empower young women and female identifying people in creative and technical roles to explore what a world without gender inequality would look like.
- To identify and overcome barriers for participation for young women from CALD backgrounds.
- To facilitate the co-creation of artworks that foster young women's independence through art making.

A weeklong workshop called Technofeminist Futures imagined what a Gender Equal Future could sound like.

Female Futures also worked with African-Australian young women running podcasting and filmmaking workshops at the Drum in Carlton with artists Ayan Shira and Elizabeth Langslow. Young people's personal accounts about making the films are available. One hundred and five audience members joined the Workshop Drum podcast facilitated by Ayan Shira.



Images from film workshop

After the completion of the creative programs by the young participants, their works were showcased. The [Female Futures website](#) launched in 27th July 2020.

In June 2020, Signal was joined by [Bittersweet](#) to host three video conversations between women of colour around [hair](#), [colourism](#) and [creative women of colour](#) involving twelve participants.

The Female Futures project culminated in an online Creative Futures Forum in June 2020. The forum aimed to give young women and non-binary creatives the opportunity to get tips and advice around breaking into the arts industry. The forum featured creative producers Areej Nur, Mel Pose, Naomi Velaphi and filmmaker Claudia Sangiorgi Dalimore and was facilitated by Female Futures' Associate Producer Samira Farah. The panel session of the Creatives Futures Forum can be [viewed](#).

The following quote from a Creative Futures Forum attendee illustrates the ways in which events such as the Creatives Forum can help overcome the negative effects of gender stereotyping and empower young women/non-binary people hoping to enter the creative industries.

“

Personally, I haven't had many opportunities to be exposed to different arts events, work collaboratively or meet people who are interested or are working within the industry. I've always been quite insecure and self-conscious about my creative abilities as most people in my family are quite conservative; having little passion or exposure to the arts and favouring boys over girls, so I haven't had much support from most of my family. But seeing other women talking about their work in the industry was certainly uplifting and liked to see the different kinds of people with similar interests to mine. I was always unsure of how I could approach other people who are in the industry or have similar goals, but this has given me a little more confidence in myself.

Although the Creatives Forum was transitioned to an on-line environment, with some difficulties associated with the limitations of on-line platforms, participants still experienced a sense of connection with fellow attendees.

“

The connection came from the fact that I shared similar values to most of the attendees and we were equally as involved in activities. The main struggle was the [zoom] setting.

Project Findings

Arts Experience / Audience

The Female Futures team incorporated three questions from the Arts Experience survey that they believed were appropriate for their project into the Female Futures website where the creative works were available for viewing. Thirty audience members responded. Overall, participants reported they had an enjoyable, educational experience that inspired them to be more engaged in gender equality discussions see Table 3 for details.

Table 3 Arts Experience – Audience Feedback

Measure	Sample size	% Strongly disagree or disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly agree
This experience was appealing or enjoyable	30	3.3 (1)	16.7 (5)	6.7 (2)	73.3(22)
I learnt something new as a result of this experience	30	3.3 (1)	23.3 (7)	6.7 (2)	66.7 (20)
This experience inspired me to be more engaged in discussing gender equality	30	6.6 (2)	16.7 (5)	16.7 (5)	60.0 (18)

Note: Total number of audience responses are in brackets.

Changes in Social Connection, Community Empowerment and Gender Equality Beliefs

The responses for the social connection, community empowerment and gender equality beliefs measures were collected before (pre) and after (post) the Summer film and Sound School workshops. Table 4 depicts the average scores for each measure. In this project more participants responded to pre- than post- surveys. The average differences for participants with both pre- and post- scores are provided. The difference scores indicate increases were demonstrated in all three variables.

Table 4 Differences in social connection, community empowerment and gender equality beliefs from pre-to-post project participation

Measure	Average Pre-participation score	Average Pre-participation score with also a post response	Average Post-participation score	Average difference for pre- and post-scores
Social Connection	4.46 (26)	4.80 (20)	5.15 (20)*	0.34 (20)
Community Empowerment	14.57 (35)	15.35(20)	16.50 (20)*	1.15 (20)
Gender Equality Beliefs	19.4 (35)	20.75(20)	22.30 (20)*	1.50 (20)

Note: Total number of participants are in brackets.

*All participants who provided a post response also provided a pre response.

Feedback from the film and sound workshop participants reinforced these outcomes. Feedback was collected by the Female Futures team via a short paper-based survey with three questions that participants were asked to comment on. Further feedback was sought during a two-hour reflection session conducted by the film artists who facilitated the workshops. The respondents indicated that the overall experience was positive: **SIGNAL Summer really exceeded my expectations as a first-timer and I hope to be coming back again.** Social connection was an important aspect of the workshops:

“

- *I felt a very strong sense of connection with everyone in my group.*
- *I feel connected to everyone and we got along good.*
- *It was really lovely getting to know everyone in the workshop. It would have been great to have done a little socialising activity everyday so that when we worked with others we already had a connection.*

One comment reinforced that social connection could be improved.

“

- *Didn't really socialise.*

Social connection was likely enhanced by the provision of a safe and supportive environment:

“

- *Really well curated, very supportive atmosphere, fantastic facilitators.*
- *We're looked after – food/safety/a lot of fun.*
- *Being with other females in an inclusive space.*

It was evident the program reinforced opportunities for females in the creative industries, which is a positive outcome in terms of addressing the gender gap in this field.

“

- *I put filmmaking off the table once I'd finished my undergrad but now I'm considering incorporating it back into my life as a prospect now. I had closed the door that I didn't realise I'd closed mentally but doing this program has opened my eyes to it still being a valid opportunity.*

When asked about the most enjoyable aspect of being involved in the workshops, the participants particularly appreciated the opportunity to develop new skills and learn from established artists who provide positive, empowering roles models to the young participants.

“

- *I learnt more during the past 10 days than I did a whole year of Uni.*
- *Learning new skills.*
- *The fact that I learnt so many skills!*
- *Being taught by my favourite artists, learning and developing cool skills.*
- *Range of artists, freedom to explore our own sounds/interests.*
- *The people and the artists.*

Feedback from the online SIGNAL Creatives Forum provided evidence the event raised awareness of opportunities for women/non-binary people in male dominated industries, thus challenging gender stereotypes.

“

- *I feel like seeing women/non-binary people in industry positions that I want helps me feel like I can access these positions as well, and getting to know their stories and the difficulties they faced will help me overcome my own obstacles.*



Project Specific Social Connection

There were 20 responses to the question about feeling a sense of connection with fellow project participants. A high proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a strong sense of connection. No-one disagreed to feeling connected. Proportions for each response category are presented in Table 14.

Project Reach and Ongoing Gender Equality Promotion

The project reported 1058 live audience numbers, 5376 views on Facebook and 2633 website visits as of 30th September 2020 (further details in Appendix G). All online webinars were streamed to multiple platforms such as Facebook Live and YouTube Live. The [Female Futures website](#) continues to feature all the films created as well as artist bios and links to the panel discussions.

Some participants of the Female Futures project have continued to contribute to work through SIGNAL arts in programming and curation, indicating that the partnership provided a welcoming opportunity for participants to enact and to continue developing their learnings.

The Female Futures project reaffirmed the importance and significance of council initiatives for the community, with the project officer noting the significant distance that some of the participants travelled in order to attend. From the Council perspective, this project bolstered commitments to gender equality work for young women and transgender and non-binary youth. The Female Futures project also strengthened capacity for future projects in this realm, through development of knowledge, skills, and gendered language awareness. Female Futures was also considered in relation to the translation potential and purpose that it could serve throughout the Council across departments, continuing the promotion of the gender equality messages and the reach of the project.

“

I look forward to sharing the Female Futures website and films with different Council areas including Arts, Libraries, Youth Services, Family Services, Community Services, Melbourne Knowledge Week, Social Investment, City Safety and many more. (Female Futures Program Manager reflection).

5.2 Bayside City – Art for a Better Democracy



Portrait of Donna Moore



Exhibition within the Council Chambers

Project Description

The Bayside City Council engaged 171 local women nominated by the community in recognition of their contribution and leadership, in many areas including sport, the arts, politics, business, social justice, volunteerism, and the media.

Working with renowned artist Ponch Hawkes, the participants were asked to wear fake moustaches and beards in their photographic portraits to humorously disrupt the Council's gender narrative. Ponch's vision was to highlight and question the stereotype of men being more capable leaders in politics and at work.

In Bayside City Council's 161-year history, only 15 female mayors have been elected to Council. The project aimed to highlight the historic under-representation of females on Council, both in the past and present. This simple yet powerful statement sought to challenge notions around leadership and raise questions about gender inequality in all facets of society.

Although the project celebrates the contribution of participants, the project also sought to encourage women to become involved in local democracy and raise awareness about gender inequality within the Bayside municipality.

PROJECT AIMS

- To increase awareness of the gender inequality in Bayside's past and current democratic representation.
- To encourage community participation in disrupting and challenging the gender narrative in Bayside's democratic representation; and
- To increase female participation in local democracy.

Each photograph was framed and displayed on the walls of the Council Chambers, replacing all previous male mayors' portraits.

A photography exhibition (online due to COVID-19) showcased the 171 photographed women.



Close up of individual portraits installed within the Council Chambers

A [live \(online\)](#) talk with artist Ponch Hawkes discussed the meaning behind the photographs and the purpose of the photography exhibition in challenging gender inequality.

A [Changing Faces website](#) featuring photographs of all 171 women and videos ensured participants of the project and the public could [view the exhibition](#).

Social media promoted the project and awareness raising about Bayside's past and current democratic representation.

Online celebration, networking and concluding event for participants was organised with Katherine Fox key note speaker and five participants shared their leadership journeys.

A hard copy and digital exhibition catalogue was made [available](#).

Project Findings

Arts Experience / Participants

The Art for a Better Democracy incorporated all ten questions from the Arts experience survey including an additional item *“this experience inspired me to take action on gender equality”* chosen specifically for their project. Participants responded to the question via an on-line survey shortly after having their portrait taken by Ponch Hawkes. One hundred and fifty-eight of the 171 portrait participants responded.

Overall, participants reported they had an enjoyable, educational experience that inspired them to support and take action on gender equality. There was a very high rate of agreement that the project raised the visibility of women in their community, and they were inspired to be more engaged in discussing gender equality (see Table 5 for details).

Table 5 Arts Experience – Participants Feedback

Measure	Sample size	% Strongly disagree or disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly agree
This experience was appealing or enjoyable	158	0.6 (1)	1.9 (3)	35.4 (56)	62.0 (98)
I learnt something new as a result of this experience	158	6.3 (10)	19.0 (30)	39.2 (62)	35.4 (56)
This experience inspired me to support action on gender equality	158	3.1 (5)	12.0 (19)	44.9 (71)	39.9 (63)
This experience challenged the way I think about the role of men and women	157	10.1 (16)	28.7 (45)	35.0 (55)	26.1 (41)
This experience made me more aware of gender inequality	158	9.5 (15)	28.5 (45)	35.4 (56)	26.6 (42)
This experience raised the visibility of women in my community	157	1.9 (3)	7.0 (11)	40.1 (63)	51.0 (80)
I felt more connected with others as result of this experience	158	4.4 (7)	26.6 (42)	41.8 (66)	27.2 (43)
My knowledge of gender equality increased as a result of this experience	158	12.1 (19)	31.0 (49)	39.2 (62)	17.7 (28)
This experience inspired me to be more engaged in discussing gender equality	158	5.7 (9)	17.1 (27)	48.1 (76)	29.1 (46)
I am interested in seeking out more information on gender equality as a result of this experience	157	7.6 (12)	24.2 (38)	48.4 (76)	19.7 (31)
This experience inspired me to take action on gender equality.	158	3.8 (6)	21.0 (33)	45.2 (71)	30.6 (48)

Note: Total number of responses are in brackets.

Changes in Social Connection, Community Empowerment and Gender Equality Beliefs

The responses for the social connection, community engagement and gender equality beliefs measures were collected before (pre) and after (post) the photography session. Table 6 depicts the average scores for each measure. In this project more participants responding to post- than pre- surveys for the Social Connection survey. The average difference for participants with both pre- and post- scores are provided. Results indicate community empowerment and gender equality beliefs increased, whilst social connection decreased slightly.

Table 6 Differences in social connection, community empowerment and gender equality beliefs from pre-to-post project participation

Measure	Average Pre-participation score	Average Pre-participation score with also a post response	Average Post-participation score	Average Post-participation score with also a pre response	Average difference for pre- and post-scores
Social Connection	5.24 (38)	5.22 (37)	5.11 (48)	5.14 (37)	-0.08 (37)
Community Empowerment	16.34 (38)	16.34 (38)	17.5 (38)	17.5 (38)	1.16 (38)
Gender Equality Beliefs	16.36 (39)	16.36 (39)	17.36 (39)	17.36 (39)	1.00 (39)

Note: Total number of participants are in brackets.

Of the 171 women who sat for a portrait, 29 participants agreed to participate in either a focus group discussion or one on one interview. Social connection was not a strong feature in this project due to the nature of the participation. The planned launch of the exhibition was cancelled shortly before the event due to Covid 19 restrictions. The loss of this opportunity to meet each other and celebrate all the female leaders was a disappointment to organisers and participants. Therefore, the qualitative data collection focussed on general feedback, support for and understanding of gender equality in relationship to leadership and the role of art in raising awareness of gender equality issues.

These women, who were nominated to participate because they were seen as leaders in the community, saw leadership as a means of empowering other women and a responsibility to take action. This gendered notion of leadership was contrasted with notions of masculine leadership as competitive rather than nurturing.

“

- *I mean I always say men operate like it's a game of chess and they only reveal another card when it suits them, whereas women say, okay, let's get together and find a solution.*
- *To me, leadership is about providing opportunities for others to develop from where they are.*
- *Leadership to me is the ability to influence others through support. It is also the ability to provide a space where everyone is encouraged to be themselves.*
- *“Leadership is being brave and stepping up when something needs to be done and bringing people along with you.*

These notions of female leadership were consistent with their motivation for participating in the portraits and their views on the role of art for social change. For many, gender inequality was already an important issue and the project provided an opportunity to take action.

“

- *I think it [art] can play a really powerful role because by creating something like these portraits, it becomes something that's an image that can be shared and can actually become talking points.*
- *The photographs promote conversations, then it's a good thing.*
- *It is really valuable. Just female artists are valuable. If there are no female artists, then there's a gender imbalance. So it starts there and female artists encourage other people to be artistic and to communicate and to be inspired and to think.*
- *Gender equality and my passion for that has been around for a long time but more so since I've had my family and had a career break. I just found how challenging it was to re-enter the workforce. Although I had the qualifications and experience and was very ambitious, still I found it a real struggle to re-enter and I think there's huge consequences for a whole demographic of women who don't have the platform or who have to work ten times as hard to get back in and a lot of the time that's at the bottom realm.*

An important outcome was raising awareness of gender inequity in their own local government.

“

- *Yes, I was definitely aware of it [gender inequality] due to my own experience but I had no idea about the disparity at Council.*
- *We talked about it within my girlfriend's family who nominated me. You know, that happens [when you become involved] and so it would be great to keep the momentum up and continue the discussions.*

A goal of the project was to encourage more women to run for Council. The project team reported many women expressed an interest in learning more about how to run for Council or promote a more gender balanced Council. However, a lack of effective communication after the project was considered to detract somewhat from its success.

“

- *And I think in a Council election year is perfect timing to actually inspire women to step up because it's a big job and you need to understand it and feel supported.*
- *And I'm sure we all put answers to similar questions on will we be interested in more information about Council, but now they never followed on anything.*
- *We all said we might be interested in going for Council. Since then, three months ago and to still be told nothing about it is a nonsense. You know this, we can talk and talk, but why isn't there a mentoring plan and process already. We all filled in forms; we all put in our little CV. Where is the opportunity for these?*

Again, it is likely the interruption to the project due to Covid-19 social distancing requirements and subsequent lockdown contributed to the delay. The portraits were published in a digital and print book, an on-line celebration occurred in August 2020 with 35 attendees. An online workshop to support women in running for Council elections was delivered with the Victorian Local Government Association to eight women.

Project Specific Social Connection

There were 49 responses to the question about feeling a sense of connection with fellow project participants. The most strongly endorsed category was neither agree or disagree. This is not surprising given the nature of involvement where portrait participants did not necessarily have the opportunity to engage with other participants. Proportions for each response category are presented in Table 14.

Project Reach and Ongoing Gender Equality Promotion

Articles promoting Changing Faces appeared in the local Let's Talk Bayside magazine June/ July 2019 and February/March 2020 editions. Changing Faces was featured in The Herald Sun on the 20 December 2019 with caption 'Hair hair, Mrs Mayor'. A series of social media posts were featured in Bayside City Council Facebook pages. This included the Facebook event with Ponch Hawkes in May 2020 which was streamed live. The Online launch exhibition video with Ponch Hawkes and Mayor had 440 views. The Bayside Council website was used to promote Changing Faces with over 3,500 views as at September 2020, with the exhibition being an ongoing feature of the website for continuing reach and project promotion.



Close up of individual portraits installed within the Council Chambers

The Art for a Better Democracy project aimed not only to draw attention to gender disparities in historical council representation, but also to encourage women who were leaders in the community to take action to increase female representation in the present. This ongoing promotion of the gender equality message is seen in the total of 35 participants who attended the online celebration, networking and concluding event, and the 8 women who participated in the online workshop with the Victorian Local Government Association to support women in running for Council elections. Further details are available in Appendix H.

Bayside City also provided the following commentary for project reach:

- Photographing 171 local women nominated as leaders of Bayside and asking them to wear a fake moustache in the photograph as a way to humorously disrupt Bayside City Council's gender narrative. Each photograph was framed and displayed on the walls of the Council Chambers, replacing all previous male mayors' portraits.
- Hosting a photography exhibition to showcase the 171 women who had their photographs taken by artist Ponch Hawkes. Due to COVID-19 the photography exhibition was moved online. Website pages were developed to include photographs of all 171 women and a video was developed to ensure participants of the project and the general public could still view the exhibition.
- Live (online) artist talk with Ponch Hawkes to discuss the meaning behind the photographs and the purpose of the photography exhibition in challenging gender equality.
- Hard copy and digital exhibition catalogue created and disseminated.
- Social media promotion of the project and awareness raising about Bayside's past and current democratic representation.
- Delivery of an online workshop with Women's Health in the South East and Victorian Local Governance Association to support women in running for Council in the October 2020 elections.
- Delivery of an online celebration, networking and concluding event for participants. Katherine Fox key note speaker and 5 participants shared their leadership journeys.



Feedback from participants also indicates that there was ongoing promotion of the gender equality message in their communities, particularly in conversations with friends, family, and colleagues about their participation and as response to the easily shared catalogue that they'd received in the mail.

Art for a Better Democracy evidently contributed to a feeling of connection amongst the participants, facilitating the emergence of a community of women leaders who were enthusiastic about using their new connections to support each other and amplify women's contributions in the community through a mentoring and leadership group.

The project officer for Art for a Better Democracy also spoke about the interest that the project had received from other Councils, speaking to the potential to take the project on a "roadshow" to continue to promote the project's messages. The Council, alongside external organisations and community leaders, are motivated to continue to develop initiatives to promote gender equality in the Bayside community.

“

- *[A key highlight of the project was...:] Many women wanting to continue the project in terms of mentoring and creating a community of women leaders in Bayside. This was unexpected but a really important and potentially long-lasting legacy of the project. (Art for a Better Democracy, project officer reflection)*

5.3 City of Port Phillip – Gender Equality Game Jam



Images from GE Game Jam

Project Description

The City of Port Phillip, in a world-first Gender Equality Game Jam (GE Game Jam) project, challenged Victorian game developers (game jammers) to create games with the theme gender equality and showcase to the public.

The games industry is over-represented by men, with recent information showing only 21% of employees in the industry are women, 48% of companies have only one gender making up their team, and only 13% of game developers are women (Australian Parliament, 2016; Game Developers Association Australia, 2018). This is despite 51% of game players being female. The impact of this gender inequality goes beyond those employed in the games industry and extends to consumers of games.

Three organisations partnered with the City of Port Phillip to address this gender inequality through a 2-day Gender Equality (GE) Game Jam – incidentally thought to be the first of its kind in the world.

Girl Geek Academy (GGA) is a Melbourne-based organisation with a mission to encourage a global movement towards gender equality in all areas of technology (including gaming). GGA led the GE Game Jam using their skills and experience supporting gender equal action in gaming and technology.

PROJECT AIMS

- To educate games arts practitioners on gender equality domains.
- To challenge gender stereotypes and roles within games industry and to consider how games can be used to inform broader community.
- To generate understanding and empathy broadly through public display and free, online access to the games.

The Arcade provided the venue for the GE Game Jam, in line with their collaborative and inclusive approach to co-working for game developers and creative companies. Star Health, a leading provider of Primary Health Services, provided support to participants and project partners in the forms of resources, information, and training in equal and respectful relationships and primary prevention.

Through this collaboration, 36 Game Jammers attended a gender equality workshop and formed teams to create free, online accessible GE Game Jam games.



Completed GE game submission from Game Jam



Completed GE game submission from Game Jam

At the Game Jam in September 2019, mixed gender teams created a gender equality inspired game from beginning to end in a prescribed time of 48 hours. Participants became immersed in gender equality issues both directly and indirectly as they worked in their own diverse teams and created a game that tackles these problems. Many of these games challenged common gendered stereotypes and biases, as seen in the workplace, in video game character creation, and in choices of baby's toys.

Others encouraged reflection and conversation around the role of gender inequality in everyday social interactions. For example, one game, set on a train, focussed on passengers' experiences of micro-aggressions (the subtle everyday slights and indignities experienced by marginalised people, especially women). It aimed to highlight the prevalence, pervasiveness, and subtlety of gender inequality in a public place and to raise awareness and encourage bystander intervention in the face of predatory behaviour on public transport.



Image from GE Game Jam Play Party event



Image from GE Game Jam Play Party event

A public Play Party event occurred in September 2019, exhibiting games developed during the GE Game Jam involving participants, mentors, and speakers.

Physical displays and game demonstrations were also held at PAX (Penny Arcade Expo) Aus 2019 in Melbourne, the largest gaming forum in the Southern Hemisphere with more than 80,000 attendees at the 2019 event.

Free, online access to GE Game Jam games and resources are available.

Project Findings

Arts Experience / Audience

The GE Game Jam team incorporated all ten questions from the Arts Experience. Nineteen of the Play Party event audience members responded. Overall, participants reported that they had an enjoyable, educational experience which inspired them to take more action and be more engaged in discussing gender equality. There was a very high rate of agreement that the experience was appealing, they learnt something new, they were inspired to support action on gender equality and the project raised the visibility of women in their community (see Table 7 for details).

Table 7 Arts Experience – Audience Feedback

Measure	Sample size	% Strongly disagree or disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly agree
This experience was appealing or enjoyable	19	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	31.6 (6)	68.4 (13)
I learnt something new as a result of this experience	19	0.0 (0)	5.3 (1)	36.8 (7)	57.9 (11)
This experience inspired me to support action on gender equality	19	5.3 (1)	10.5 (2)	26.3 (5)	57.9 (11)
This experience challenged the way I think about the role of men and women	19	15.8 (3)	15.8 (3)	36.8 (7)	31.6 (6)
This experience made me more aware of gender inequality	19	10.5 (2)	5.3 (1)	52.6 (10)	31.6 (6)
This experience raised the visibility of women in my community	19	0.0 (0)	5.3 (1)	36.8 (7)	57.9 (11)
I felt more connected with others as result of this experience	19	0.0 (0)	10.5 (2)	36.8 (7)	52.6 (10)
My knowledge of gender equality increased as a result of this experience	19	10.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	63.2 (12)	26.4 (5)
This experience inspired me to be more engaged in discussing gender equality	19	10.5 (2)	5.3 (1)	47.4 (9)	36.8 (7)
I am interested in seeking out more information on gender equality as a result of this experience	19	5.3 (1)	15.8 (3)	47.4 (9)	31.6 (6)

Note: Total number of responses are in brackets.

These findings are reinforced by the comments collected by Girl Geek Academy in a survey of Play Party audience members. It was evident the games created during the GE Game Jam event raised awareness of gender inequality.

“

- Great to see creative ideas put together in a format for promoting change
- It was great to see young men and women engaged in creating ways to address gender inequality and working to address the severe gender imbalance in game content games
- I thought that the games were right on topic
- Loved that they made me think about the issues in a different way. Some were more developed than others but loved that it was at least a starting point for more work to be done. Would like to have known more about how they might progress the games from here
- Thank you so much for your kindness and patience with our kids – what a great thing to expose them to!
- Very impressive given time constraints; especially impressed by the broad range of different concepts for games
- So grateful that people are working on this medium for gender equality

The event also raised awareness of the lack of equity in the gaming industry and addressed stereotypes of gamers.

“

- Do it! Such a great experience for my daughters
- Opened my eyes to how limited gaming is for women wishing to engage with this medium
- This event and Geek Girls are making real positive change
- The Girl Geeks is an amazing organisation that helps girls and mums to engage in coding, STEM etc.

Changes in Social Connection, Community Empowerment and Gender Equality Beliefs

The responses for the social connection, community engagement and gender equality beliefs measures were collected before (pre) GE Game Jam workshop and after (post) the GE Game Jam attended by participants. Table 8 depicts the average scores for each measure. In this project more participants responded to post- than pre- surveys. The average difference for participants with both pre- and post- scores are provided. Results indicate community empowerment and gender equality beliefs increased. There was a slight decrease in social connection.

Table 8 Differences in social connection, community empowerment and gender equality beliefs from pre-to-post project participation

Measure	Average Pre-participation score	Average Pre-participation score with also a post response	Average Post-participation score	Average Post-participation score with also a pre response	Average difference for pre- and post-scores
Social Connection	5.33 (27)	5.36 (22)	5.22 (36)	5.14 (22)	-0.23 (22)
Community Empowerment	15.52 (27)	15.77 (22)	17.42 (36)	17.32 (22)	1.55 (22)
Gender Equality Beliefs	19.37 (27)	19.45 (22)	22.19 (36)	22.05 (22)	2.59 (22)

Note: Total number of participants are in brackets.

The project team collected feedback from GE Game Jam participants following the two-day gaming creation event via a post-GE Game Jam survey. There were many comments that reflected the project not only provided a space for social connection, but it also highlighted the importance of working together to achieve social change.

“

- *Put your wellbeing first. You are not making a masterpiece; game jams are about community, personal growth and fun; the end game doesn't need to be great – (GE Game Jam participant, post-GE Game Jam Survey)*
- *Find out your teammates' core strengths and absolutely play to them. You don't have to be what you're not if someone else can complement your skills (GE Game Jam participant, post-GE Game Jam Survey)*
- *Diverse team members make better products due to the variety of perspectives (GE Game Jam participant, post-GE Game Jam Survey)*

The non-binary environment achieved by the GE Game Jam was interpreted by the team as a particularly important element in creating an inclusive social environment that was appreciated by the game jammers:

“

- *Too much of gender equality is based on binary ideas of gender. So it's nice to come to a place that values the whole conversation*
- *It was very good ... very inclusive and took into account things outside of the gender-binary of male and female which was very important to me*

It was evident the GE Game Jam participants demonstrated motivation and confidence to address gender inequality issues and promote gender equality. The provision of a gender equality workshop by Star Health, prior to the game jam weekend may have contributed to these positive outcomes.

“

- *We still have a long way to go but we're gonna do it! One step at a time!*
- *There are a lot of issues to explore and it's really important for everyone feeling affected (which is everyone!) to have their concerns acknowledged as valid*
- *Aggression won't help change the problems, promoting empathy and healthy conversations for all can inspire change*
- *Even small changes can make a big difference Together we accomplish more*

There was also awareness of the difficulties faced and slow progress made in gender equality work.

“

- *Time limits make things harder. It's a long conversation not a short one*
- *It is a very big, underestimated and under-appreciated issue*
- *The people who need the most education are people who don't want to engage*
- *Gender equality isn't a binary issue*





Images from GE Game Jam Play Party event

Project Specific Social Connection

There were 36 responses to the question about feeling a sense of connection with fellow project participants. A high proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a strong sense of connection. Less than 6% disagreed to feeling a sense of connection. Proportions for each response category are presented in Table 14.

Project Reach and Ongoing Gender Equality Promotion

The project reported 27 participants attended the gender equality workshop. Thirty-six GE Game Jam participants, 10 presenters and 54 public members attended the Play Party event. The games produced during the game jam were made available online, along with other resources. They were accessed 117 times at the time of reporting. Social media included Twitter, Facebook, and LinkedIn posts. Further details are available in Appendix I.

The GE Game Jam resulted in a number of games that challenged gender stereotypes and encouraged conversations about gender equality, which continue to be available online. Many of these games were also displayed at PAX Aus 2019 to increase project reach. The opportunities and connections made by participants through the GE Game Jam and through exhibiting their work at PAX Aus 2019 acted to motivate participants to continue to promote gender equality. This occurred in multiple ways: participants were encouraged to break the mould of standard games by making games that follow their passions and interests, such as those with messages for social change and gender equality.

Participants were also encouraged to continue to develop their skills and confidence in the highly male-dominated games development industry, due to the creation and strengthening of a gender-sensitive and supportive community. Nine months on, participants of the GE Game Jam indicated that their engagement with issues of gender equality had developed further; for example, one participant recounted their experience of starting a group to encourage and support diversity in their workplace. The GE Game Jam project officer also indicated that this initiative has contributed to a greater understanding within the Council of the capacity and potential of the arts in work for social change and gender equality, opening more possibilities for future projects.

“

Council is thinking of doing some more work with Girl Geek Academy after this project... I think it raised the awareness of how arts can be used in a different capacity. (GE Game Jam, project officer)



Image from GE Game Jam Play Party event

5.4 South Gippsland Shire – Girls Own Space



Before and after images of Foster project

Project Description

The South Gippsland Shire Council, in response to the community concern about violence against women, developed the “Girls Own Space” project, to encourage women and girls to feel more secure in public spaces.

Girls Own Space involved the claiming of a space in the towns of Korumburra, Leongatha, Foster and Mirboo North, to become safe and inclusive, through the vehicle of art.

In each town, a women’s peer network of young and older women of all abilities was established to work with Council staff, professional artists, artist mentors and local community members to activate a public place where they would like to feel more safe, secure, and welcome.

The project ran 44 workshops in total with six Foster, four Mirboo North, 18 Leongatha and 16 Korumburra participants.

PROJECT AIMS

- To provide the opportunity, space, & platform for young regional women to physically mark their presence in their local environment – increased visibility of women and of gender equality issues broadly.
- To expose young regional women and our broader community to a high-quality arts experience with professional artists/mentors whilst building the capacity of our local artists to deliver in this space.

Foster project created a welcoming recreational space by painting a native plant mural on a shed. It collaborated with the Foster Secondary College Arts Department which incorporated a week of Girls Own Space activities into their curriculum to complete the project. Six participants attended workshops in Foster.



Mirboo North communal seating project

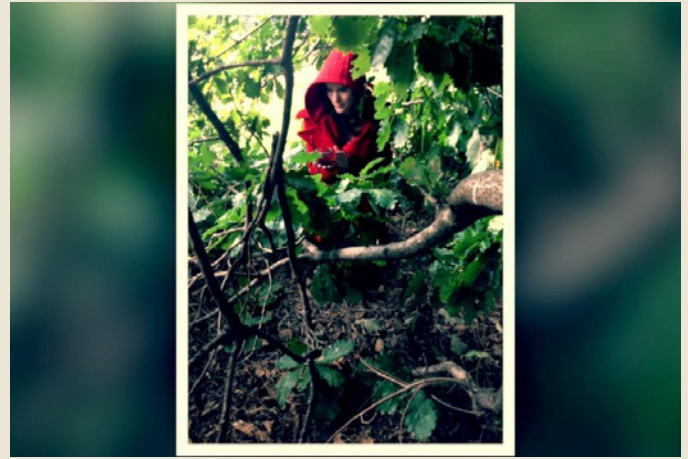


Image of Little Red Riding Hood in Leongatha Park



After image of Mirboo North courtyard



Image of Korumburra railway passage project

Mirboo North project claimed a courtyard space by creatively designing communal seating made from cypress wood. This project ran a structured and professional design development process throughout their workshops. Six participating members (including the artists) 'owned' all aspects and stages of the project. The resulting community seating utilises beautiful slabs of overlapping reclaimed timber on concrete plinths in an innovative and inclusive design.

The seating was further enhanced with synthetic grass, two olive trees and a planter filled with lavender. Four participants attended workshops in Mirboo North.

Leongatha project promoted young women in the context of the Little Red Riding Hood story in the horticultural park. Although workshops took place, the short film produced was deemed unacceptable for viewing by the Director of Yooralla and Specialist school and required more input/collaboration from the organisations.

Samples of footage were acceptable to be included in the [documentary](#). The documentary showcased all four projects from start to completion.

Eighteen participants attended workshops in Leongatha. All workshops took place in a school room, with support workers present, aside from two film sessions which took place on site. The logistics of this project had to be tailored to the specific needs of the cohort, all of whom had varied needs.

Korumburra project transformed a dark and dingy railway passage to a vibrant space using murals. This project was supported by the Business Association as well as the Community House, with representatives from both, appearing regularly at workshops. Sixteen participants attended workshops in Korumburra.

Documentary showcasing the project is [available](#). Girls own space commenced in late June 2020 and after a significant interruption due to COVID-19 restrictions throughout March – November 2020, was completed in December 2020.

Project Findings

Arts Experience / Participants

The Girls Own Space team incorporated all ten questions from the Arts Experience survey. Eleven participants responded. Overall participants reported they had an enjoyable, educational experience that made them more aware of gender inequality and inspired them to be more engaged in discussing gender equality. There was a very high rate of agreement that the experience was appealing, the project raised the visibility of women in their community, and increased interest in seeking out more information on gender equality. Participants felt more connected to others as a result of their participation (see Table 9 for details).



Completed Korumburra project

Table 9 Arts Experience – Participants Feedback

Measure	Sample size	% Strongly disagree or disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly agree
This experience was appealing or enjoyable	11	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9.1 (1)	90.9 (10)
I learnt something new as a result of this experience	11	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	45.5 (5)	54.6 (6)
This experience inspired me to support action on gender equality	11	0.0 (0)	27.3 (3)	45.5 (5)	27.3 (3)
This experience challenged the way I think about the role of men and women	11	0.0 (0)	9.1 (1)	63.6 (7)	27.3 (3)
This experience made me more aware of gender inequality	11	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	81.8 (9)	18.2 (2)
This experience raised the visibility of women in my community	11	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9.1 (1)	90.9 (10)
I felt more connected with others as result of this experience	11	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0))	27.3 (3)	72.7 (8)
My knowledge of gender equality in-creased as a result of this experience	11	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	36.4 (4)	63.6 (7)
This experience inspired me to be more engaged in discussing gender equality	11	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	45.5 (5)	54.6 (6)
I am interested in seeking out more in-formation on gender equality as a result of this experience	11	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	18.2 (2)	81.8 (9)

Note: Total number of responses are in brackets.



Completed Foster project



Image of Foster project

Changes in Social Connection, Community Empowerment and Gender Equality Beliefs

The responses for the social connection, community engagement and gender equality measures were not collected during this project. This project was substantially impacted by Covid 19, resulted in lengthy delays and loss of contact with participants from local schools. This prevented collection of the before and after measures.

However, participant feedback was collected in several forms. Formal interviews were conducted with participants and artists in the context of a documentary film. The number and range of participants for this element was also reduced due to Covid 19. To augment this data, the Council project officers also conducted formal interviews with the artists who had worked with the young women to ascertain their perceptions of the participants' experiences. The project facilitators also had informal discussions with the participants, facilitating artists and project partners. Formal interviews with the Leongatha cohort were not undertaken on the recommendation of support workers from Yooralla and the Specialist school involved. The findings from these various sources need to be understood in the social context of the groups of young people involved in the projects.

As the facilitators noted in their report:

“

- *The vast majority of young women involved in these projects (Korumburra, Foster and Mirboo North) identify themselves as 'outsiders', i.e., not into sport or part of the mainstream of regional small-town life. They are most often shy and introverted and took some time to open up to the group, including the facilitating artists. The most valuable understandings of the impact of these projects has come from conversations the artists have had with participants, as well as unprompted conversations that took place around the table among the group. The underpinning promise of Girls Own Space was always to provide a safe, gentle, respectful, creative space for participants, where these conversations could take place organically. We intentionally did not program any workshops or formalised, facilitated conversations around gender equity, and briefed the facilitating artists as such. We hoped that this approach would bring more genuine conversations, connections and sharing among the participants. Unfortunately, as all of this was beginning to take place, and to go deeper, the COVID shutdowns also happened. However, the facilitating artists reported many instances of amazing trust and experience sharing among their groups, as hoped.*

There was evidence that the combined projects offered participants an environment for safe and supported social connection along with empowering them to contribute and feel connected to their communities in ways that might otherwise not have been possible.

“

- *I was pretty excited to be part of this project, to be involved in an artwork. There's not much that happens like this around here. And just to be able to connect with each other in the workshops and bond and... feel like you're around people that you can trust. It was really nice. I really enjoyed talking to everyone.*
(participant Foster project)
- *I joined this project because I thought it was a really good idea to give back to the community and to do something that makes people engage with each other especially in a small town. And that has definitely happened... It feels amazing – that you can be the one that, that's responsible to have people engaging in the space.*
(participant Mirboo North project)
- *The opportunity in this project was to give them [the participants] the confidence to speak out, so their voices can be heard and that they're relevant and valid. Certainly, in the workshops some of the shy ones did speak out and it was great. An opportunity to be part of a much bigger community – an art community, a digital media community – which they're now a part of.*
(Leongatha artist)
- *There was a great sense of collaboration – and we treated everyone as collaborators, regardless of their experience. Some are or had been practicing artists but some had not been making art for some time. Some brought along examples of their work to share, and they received feedback (from the group) which was really nice because they are artists. So, I think they found support in one another as well. And there were some that liked poetry and others that liked the poetry, and these sorts of connections were really important and affirming. So, they all brought their own way of working, and (in sharing this) it opened up new possibilities for themselves and each other. Sometimes this was honouring the way of working.*
(Korumburra-visual artist)

Gender equality was promoted in the projects, especially in their contribution to overcoming stereotypes.

“

- *We spoke about how one student who identified as non-binary didn't want to take part in the Girls Own Space project because they didn't identify as strictly female, and this led to interesting discussions around inclusivity, acceptance, awareness and kindness. We spoke out how some of the girls identified as bisexual or gay, and how other friends and students reacted to that once it became known to them. I was able to applaud them for their maturity and self-awareness, the world has changed so much from when I was in high school. These conversations opened up with a sense of trust in the group.* (Foster –visual artist)
- *Monday was wonderful! There were 13 participants who immersed themselves fully in the creative flow. We only gave a loose introduction to the concept, but they ran with it themselves and had some pretty frank discussions; living with a disability, being bullied and childhood family abuse (already being dealt with by the law), all of which were received by the group in an incredibly supportive manner. One participant, aghast at how another had been bullied for her disability said “but we're all different... just like our art”. I loved that she equated multiple abilities with different modes of expressing oneself. They also discussed poetry, cosmic stuff, their art and ideas for the mural. I was surprised with their level of engagement around the subject matter of gender equity itself. We hadn't planned to structure the project in that way, but we didn't know if they would come to it, but they really did. There was a parent there who said it was lovely to see how engaged and enthusiastic they were. Gonzalo and I also had great fun.”*
(Korumburra-visual artist)
- *I think the sheer physicality of this project was definitely challenging for artists, participants and passer's-by. The project team relayed a number of conversations they had with the general public around women, tools and construction, and the unusual sight this workshop was.*
(Council project facilitator re Mirboo-North)



Images of The Girls Own Space Team in Mirboo North

Project Specific Social Connection

There were 11 responses to the question about feeling a sense of connection with fellow project participants. All respondents agreed or strongly agreed to feeling a strong sense of connection with other participants. Indeed, over 90% strongly agreed. Proportions for each response category are presented in Table 14.

Project Reach and Ongoing Gender Equality Promotion

Social media included Facebook posts and eight newspaper articles. In total, sixteen project partners were recruited and described as critical to the successful delivery of each project, to different degrees across the four teams. Further details are available in Appendix J.

Project partners included:

- Foster** Foster Secondary College; Foster Netball Club; Foster Football Club; Foster Recreation Reserve Committee; Foster Community House; Stockyard Gallery (Foster)
- Mirboo North** Mirboo North Community Foundation; Mirboo North Secondary College; Mirboo North Arts
- Leongatha** Leongatha Specialist School; Leongatha Yooralla; Leongatha FReeZA group;
- Korumburra** Korumburra Secondary College; Korumburra Community House; Korumburra Men's Shed; Korumburra Business Association

An interesting aspect of the reach of the Girls Own Space was its ability to attract project partners. It is possible this may be related to a greater sense of community and more awareness by community members regarding what is occurring in their towns in regional areas. The project officers summarised the diversity of community partners.

“

- *The partner relationship was particularly strong with the Mirboo North Community Foundation (MNCF) who offered the use of the Foundation's courtyard as a 'canvas' for design – with very few caveats and design controls or edits from the board. The reach that this physical space affords the project is extensive, as it is very public and central to the town. The MNCF have great connection across the community, and the ongoing potential for this project to communicate the broader goals of the project is very real.*
- *Foster community partners, the Recreation Reserve Committee, volunteered support by handing over of an entire shed, again with no caveats or controls over the design content of the proposed mural. An interesting factor in this project is that this town has an unusual number of students identifying as same sex attracted and gender non-specific. Foster has, as a community, been forced into discussion (not always acceptance) around non-traditional gender roles. Discussions with partner representatives almost always involved the retelling of these stories and how people were viewing the uneasy shift into 'modern times'.*

The visibility and lasting nature of many of these projects has a direct impact on the durability of their messages and community impact. This contributed to ripples of conversation in the broader community and a strong sense of pride from participants.

“

- *The [Mirboo North] project team relayed a number of conversations they had with the general public around women, tools and construction, and the unusual sight this workshop was.*
- *Many of the participants spoke of the pride they have in knowing that their community will be viewing this work on a daily basis. Within this sense of pride of the work made is a joy and awe that major pieces of public infrastructure have been handed over to young women. (Girls Own Space project facilitator)*

The Girls Own Space project has also contributed to changes in the ways that South Gippsland Shire Council engage with projects of inclusion, connection, social change, and gender equality. The Council recently committed \$252,000 of the \$2,000,000 Covid recovery fund to 10 community art projects, many of which are targeted towards inclusion and connection. The Council is also making a more public and formal commitment to campaigns for gender equality, such as the 16 Days of Activism campaign.



5.5 Knox City – Framed By Gender



Images from Hotham Street Ladies Shop of Opportunities

Project Description

The Knox City Council developed in partnership with community organisations and local groups, *Framed by Gender*, featuring two community art projects addressing gender inequality.

Over the month of November 2019, Boronia Library was activated by artist Anna Farago and Boronia Mall by The Hotham Street Ladies. Guided by local social change agencies, these artists invited audiences to explore gender stereotypes and roles, gendered spaces, and concepts of privilege and respect. The program also included a variety of innovative workshops that used art as a medium to engage in conversations about gender equality.

The Shop of Opportunity was a large-scale art installation that explored themes of gender inequality, with a series of accompanying community workshops, by **The Hotham Street Ladies**. The installation was based at the vacant shopfront on the first floor of Boronia Mall. Four of the external store windows housed works based around a key statistic or set of statistics related to gender inequality.

PROJECT AIMS

- To disrupt, explore and positively reframe notions of gender equality.
- To explore gender stereotypes and roles, the strengthening of positive, equal, and respectful relationships
- To promote women's independence and decision making.

Each artwork was created from a mix of fabricated pieces (made of icing and fondant) and objects sourced from the op shops in Knox. The installation also incorporated a series of painted signs in the style of the mall's original promotional signwriting, as well as other elements including posters and billboards. The installation was a part of and the base of community activations within Boronia Mall.

Videos showcasing the installation and community karaoke events are [available](#).



Karaoke Event – I am Woman Hear Me Mall

Hotham Street Ladies designed and conducted workshops and activities were to appeal to diverse ages and cultures. These included

- 1 Opening – Facilitated karaoke: Songs about women and gender, amplifying women's voices (80 audience members)
- 2 Feminism for Kids: Families discuss gender issues via food
- 3 Scavenger Hunt: HSL will create a map exploring gender themes in public spaces
- 4 Femme Frost Off – 'Frosting' event, street art style, and identifying/transforming gendered spaces

The **Words for Change** project by artist Anna Farago and in collaboration with local community groups focused on gender issues as they relate to violence against women. It addressed all domains of gender equality and advocated for positive attitudinal and actual change utilising the structure of the 10 Essential and Supporting Actions to Reduce the Gendered Drivers of Violence against Women published by Our Watch.

Handwritten quotes or words were screen-printed onto banners, plastered on light boxes, or expressed on colourful bunting and put on display. Local students, men's behaviour change group members, and local women's craft groups participated and provided their ideas to shape the content of this thought-provoking work.



Images of Words for Change

The repetition of local voices – male, female, young and old – expressed in text, framed in a positive, colourful, immersive manner sent powerful, empowering messages to everyone who entered Boronia Mall, Boronia Library, Swinburne University Gallery and Cinema laneway via the light boxes.

Words for Change screen printing workshops included:

- In centre space of Boronia Mall with public: 1 workshop (40 participants)
- Craft groups: 1 workshop in Boronia Library and 2-3 women visited Anna Farago's studio 4 times to continue the work.
- Storytelling workshop at Boronia Library: 1 workshop (3 participants)
- Men's Behaviour Change: observed 2 groups for 2 weeks then worked with a select group of men who volunteered.
- Schools: Years 5-9 (35 + 30 participants)
 - Boronia K-12 College: 2 workshops (each workshop 5 hours duration)
 - Scoresby Secondary College: 1 workshop (approximately 5 hours duration)

Project Findings

Arts Experience / Participants

The Framed by Gender team incorporated all ten questions from the Arts Experience Survey. Forty-four event participants across the various events and workshops that comprised the Framed by Gender project responded. Overall, participants reported that they had an enjoyable, educational experience which inspired them to be more engaged in discussing gender equality. There was a very high rate of agreement that the experience was appealing and inspired them to support action on gender equality (see Table 10 for details).



Words for Change workshop

Table 10 Arts Experience – Participants Feedback

Measure	Sample size	% Strongly disagree or disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly agree
This experience was appealing or enjoyable	44	2.3 (1)	4.6 (2)	34.1 (15)	59.1 (26)
I learnt something new as a result of this experience	44	13.6 (6)	11.4 (5)	47.7 (21)	27.3 (12)
This experience inspired me to support action on gender equality	44	6.8 (3)	6.8 (3)	45.5 (20)	40.9 (18)
This experience challenged the way I think about the role of men and women	44	15.9 (7)	36.4 (16)	27.3 (12)	20.5 (9)
This experience made me more aware of gender inequality	44	13.6 (6)	22.7 (10)	27.3 (12)	36.4 (16)
This experience raised the visibility of women in my community	44	6.8 (3)	11.4 (5)	38.6 (17)	43.2 (19)
I felt more connected with others as result of this experience	44	6.8 (3)	18.2 (8)	38.6 (17)	36.4 (16)
My knowledge of gender equality in-creased as a result of this experience	44	13.6 (6)	25.0 (11)	38.6 (17)	22.7 (10)
This experience inspired me to be more engaged in discussing gender equality	44	9.1 (4)	18.2 (8)	40.9 (18)	31.8 (14)
I am interested in seeking out more in-formation on gender equality as a result of this experience	44	11.4 (5)	29.6 (13)	27.3 (12)	31.8 (14)

Note: Total number of responses are in brackets.

Changes in Social Connection, Community Empowerment and Gender Equality Beliefs

Due to the limited engagement with participants in this project, responses for the social connection, community engagement and gender equality beliefs measures were not collected. The project team collected feedback informally. As the participants were attendees of single workshops or were bystanders in the mall, their comments and questions and were noted by artists and staff of Knox City Council in post activity reflection sheets.

Some of the comments from bystanders that were overheard by staff and artists as the installation in Boronia Mall was being developed were quite critical of the project, indicating that it had created a reactive discourse in the community regarding gender equality. Although this can present an opportunity for discussion that addresses such resistance, the art installation (Shop of Opportunity), that elicited the negativity was not designed or equipped to facilitate further discussion. The following examples provided by the project partners reflect a level of aggression against the visual messages that highlighted gender equality.

“

- *I dunno what the shop used to be, but it looks like the f..... feminists have taken over.*
- *A male community member stopped to suggest that one of the artists/staff members (all female) should be in the kitchen (but afterwards suggested it was a joke).*
- *Whilst the Hotham Street Ladies were installing the shopfront, a small group of younger men rapped on the windows and 'flipped the bird' and mouthed "F... Off".*
- *A young couple were walking past and the woman was reading aloud the signwriting and the male partner mumbled "No time for this s...." and "What's this bull...."*
- *A shop owner verbally abused the filmmaker whilst he was documenting one of the window designs. Apparently the first thing that was said was "hey mate why don't you just f... off?". This then led to a barrage of ranting that included references to the content, questions of permission and concluded with the filmmaker being told to just "wear a dress."*

However, there was some level of support from other community members:

“

- *A grandmother, young mum and two young daughters stopped to ask about it and were seemingly very enthusiastic particularly about the free activities.*
- *An older lady in a mobility scooter was very supportive of the installation and the project as a whole. She left with a flyer and was going to try and attend some of the events.*

In contrast, the workshops, which were open to the community on a drop-in basis received more positive feedback and generated discussion around violence against women and services in the community.

“

- *Female participant said she was not aware of the local organisations like EACH Community Health Services and Relationships Australia Victoria but was going to follow up with them to see how she could utilise their work for the members of her sporting community (Re: Storytelling Boronia Library).*
- *Two female participants were very much involved with the discussion and direction regarding issues related to domestic/familial abuse (Re: Storytelling Boronia Library).*
- *Male participant was largely interested in his own agenda and presented arguments against some discussion point/consistently attempted to 'redirect' the argument of equality (Re: Storytelling Boronia Library).*
- *People asked what we were doing. The small people (children) were intrigued by the machines (Re: Words for change, sewing circle, 26/10/2019).*
- *The participants were very enthusiastic, loved the session, spirited about the content of the artworks and glad to be involved (Re: Words for change, sewing circle, 26/10/2019).*
- *This is great, there should be more things like this [free workshop] here [in Boronia Mall] (Words for Change launch Workshop 9/11/2019).*
- *The project is cool but maybe it would be more suited to the north like Fitzroy (Words for Change launch Workshop 9/11/2019).*

Feedback from the schools involved in the Words for Change project indicated that awareness of gender inequality had been raised. Interestingly there was recognition of the empowering quality of art for social change, as evidenced by the following comments by students from Boronia College.

“

- *I think that art can make a difference.*
- *I love it... It reminds you that you are loved, somewhere (when asked about working on the project)*
- *Art can be a very powerful way to spread a message or talk to someone*
- *We shouldn't be expected to behave in a certain way*
- *People will respond in 3 ways-they'll be like pfft, whatever or they will think it's nice or they might be empowered to take it on*

The involvement of the school in the Words for Change element of the project has provided an opportunity for the school to reflect on its role in addressing gender stereotyping. In response to a direct question about potential future gender equality initiatives at Boronia College, a senior member of the school staff commented:

“

- *We would definitely want to pursue further activities/ actions around gender and gender equality. The school has some issues around how males see the role of females in the community and females have issues around their role in the community. Add into the mix the fluid nature of gender by some members of the community, we feel there is still work to be done. We think working with the younger cohorts has meant they have been exposed to a conversation around gender, however, for the benefit of this to be fully appreciated there needs to be follow up and this most definitely involves the school and other interested organisations. We need to continue to reinforce the language and ideas raised in the workshop.*

Event announcements and showcases were published in the Knox arts and culture Facebook pages and Knox City Council Facebook pages, attracting about 100,000 views (see Appendix K for further details). There were three brief Facebook comments tagging others to view the posts.

Project Specific Social Connection

There were 43 responses to the question about feeling a sense of connection with project participants. This project used a 5-point Likert scale to measure feedback (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

A high proportion of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a strong sense of connection. Less than 12% disagreed to feeling a sense of connection. Proportions for each response category are presented in Table 14.



Karaoke Event – I am Woman Hear Me Mall



Disrupting gender stereotypes through art

Framed by Gender



Images for Framed by Gender published on Knox Facebook and Instagram

Project Reach and Ongoing Gender Equality Promotion

To ensure maximum reach events were published on Knox City Council Facebook sites, the Knox City Council official website and the artists' social media platforms.

To extend the project further, in March 2020 a curated selection of six photographs were installed for twelve months in the Boronia Light boxes. Additionally, following the projects initial installation in Boronia Mall, items were displayed at Boronia Library. Further details are available in Appendix K.

The Framed by Gender projects were embedded in community spaces, Boronia Library and Boronia Mall. Due to these locations, the broader community were the audience for the artworks largely as they went about their day-to-day activities. In this setting, an audience was reached that perhaps would not have otherwise considered issues of gender inequality, sparking discussions from a range of standpoints. Workshop participants engaged with these conversations meaningfully, and some had the opportunity to take home their own functional piece of artwork with a gender equality-aligned message that may prompt further dialogue for an ongoing project impact.

The project officer has also considered how learnings from this project could contribute to the Council's pre-existing and future programs targeting gender inequality, to maximise the impact of these initiatives. In particular, the enthusiasm of community partners (including schools) was a major asset that could be harnessed, whilst the resourcing, timelines, and project team must be developed to be appropriate for the size, scope, and intention of projects for best outcomes.

In general the community organisations seemed extremely welcoming of invitations to be involved and perhaps these are little-tapped resources that could be included in further council activity. Schools' keen involvement... Local schools, smaller schools, can be neglected and in my experience, are always welcoming of being tied to local community through projects like this.

(Framed by Gender, project officer reflection)

5.6 Yarra Ranges – Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges



Annie Boorat, sister of William Barak, photographed in 1866 at age 30. Annie is featured in *Balit Bagurrk*.



Cover image for *Balit Bagurrk* – an example of Brooke Wandin's weaving.

Project Description

The Yarra Ranges Council has partnered with Oonah Health & Community Services Aboriginal Corporation (formerly HICSA) to create a community-defined publication project based on **Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges**.

Balit Bagurrk means 'strong woman' in Woiwurrung, the local language of the Traditional Owners of the Yarra Ranges region, the Wurundjeri people. These women are honoured in a book, launched in March 2021 attended by seventy people (maximum capacity due to COVID restrictions), which shares the stories, poems, and artwork of First Nations women in the Yarra Ranges.

It features historical information, deeply moving personal accounts and photographs to tell the stories of strong Indigenous women whose actions shaped the Yarra Ranges and many who live here.

PROJECT AIMS

- To address gender inequality by questioning dominant narratives.
- To find, explore, celebrate, create awareness, and repeat the stories of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander women who have shaped the local community in the past, their descendants, and women leaders in the contemporary Aboriginal community of Yarra Ranges.
- To build knowledge of these women within and outside their own community, shift the historical narrative to include them and provide more inspiration for emerging female leaders.



Image from book launch



Image from Balit Bagurrk workshop



Image from Balit Bagurrk workshop

The publication project was inspired by the history of Aboriginal Community organisations in the Yarra Ranges from the 1970s by women from the community, including the Healesville Aboriginal Cooperative, Swinburne’s Oonah, and Healesville Indigenous Community Services Association, as well as the 2018 NAIDOC theme ‘Because of her we can’.

These stories have been collected by community engagement and consultation, interviews and through open submissions.

Two workshops were also held, led by the Koorie Circle’s Laura Thompson which supported women to share stories and honour a strong Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander friend, mother, grandmother, sister, daughter, Elder or cultural leader. The workshops also provided an opportunity for different generations of women to connect, develop a new creative skill, earring making, and, of course, have some fun. A video showcasing the workshops is [available](#). The first workshop had twenty-five participants and the second had seventeen.

Project Findings

Arts Experience / Participants

The **Balit Bagurrk** team incorporated six questions from the Arts Experience survey. Three of these were changed to incorporate the project theme:

“This experience raised the visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in my community”

“I felt more connected to a sense of a shared heritage and story as a result of this experience”

“My personal knowledge of the role of Aboriginal women in our community increased as a result of this experience”.

One additional question was collected for the Arts experience, *“I felt culturally safe as an Aboriginal or First nations person participating in this project”*



Images from Balit Bagurrk workshop

Thirty-one workshop participants responded. Overall, participants reported that they had an enjoyable, culturally safe, educational, and shared experience which increased visibility, connection, and knowledge of women in the community. There was a very high rate of agreement that the experience was appealing, raised the visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in the community and participants felt culturally safe as an Aboriginal or First Nations person and more connected to a sense of a shared heritage and story, (see Table 11).

Table 11 Arts Experience – Participants Feedback

Measure	Sample size	% Strongly disagree or disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly agree
This experience was appealing or enjoyable	31	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100 (31)
I felt culturally safe as an Aboriginal or First Nations person participating in this project	28	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.6 (1)	96.4 (27)
I learnt something new as a result of this experience	31	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	32.3 (10)	67.7 (21)
This experience challenged the way I think about the role of men and women	29	0.0 (0)	48.3 (14)	34.5 (10)	17.4 (5)
This experience raised the visibility of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in my community	30	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	23.3 (7)	76.7 (23)
I felt more connected to a sense of a shared heritage and story as a result of this experience	31	0.0 (0)	6.5 (2)	19.4 (6)	74.2 (23)
My personal knowledge of the role of Aboriginal women in our community increased as a result of this experience	30	0.0 (0)	23.3 (7)	30.0 (9)	46.7 (14)

Note: Total number of responses are in brackets.

Changes in Social Connection, Community Engagement and Gender Equality Beliefs

The responses for the social connection, community engagement and gender equality beliefs measures were not collected during this project. The project team opted to collect project specific feedback from the women who contributed to the publication or were interviewed for the publication via an online survey (N = 24) comprised of mostly open-ended questions that allowed the women to answer freely with as much detail as they wanted. Post workshop feedback was also collected (N = 19)

The responses indicated that the project provided a caring and nurturing environment that facilitated a deep sense of connection with each other and with their culture. All respondents agreed that the project was conducted in a culturally safe way. Sharing stories and memories of strong Aboriginal women provided a sense of connection or, perhaps, reconnection with country and ancestry.

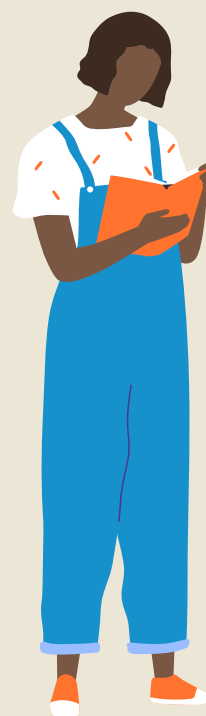
“

- *It was an opportunity to yarn with other participants and hear about which Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Aunties influenced each of our lives and in what ways.*
- *It was an honour to pay respects to the powerful women of country.*
- *I felt a sense of connection with the women who came before me, and with the women still to come.*
- *It was a very emotional process for me. I have so much admiration for the women I write about and about our Aboriginal community.*
- *I loved hearing about the women that inspired those on my table, and why they dedicated their creation. Loved looking at all the earring designs.*
- *I was sung happy birthday in Woiwurrung :)*

It was important to the women who contributed to the publication to celebrate the strong Aboriginal women represented in their dedications. By acknowledging their contribution as strong and valued members of the community, a sense of collective empowerment was engendered.

“

- *Empowering. It gave me agency and a voice – for the world to hear and others to be encouraged in their life journey to never give up even when faced with challenges.*
- *I felt so humbled by all the amazing women and all their trials and tribulations and how we don't give up and keep our families and culture strong in so many diverse and often under appreciated ways.*
- *I am sure it will re-awaken inspiration amongst everyone in the community and especially giving all women, past and present, the recognition they deserve and more generally a greater insight into how important women are in continuing culture despite all obstacles.*
- *It's a wonderful idea of honouring local women, Aboriginal culture and building community.*
- *It was an honour to have my artwork dedicated to Aunty Dot, who taught me so much and who I feel watching over us all. I was also very proud to have my poetry feature in the book, as writing is a passion of mine.*



The Balit Bagurrk project provides an exemplar of what could be considered a gendered form of empowerment, where women are empowered by building relationships and providing nurturance and care to each other.

“

- *It means that no matter who you are or what you do you are accepted as you are, and this helps us to be strong Aboriginal women working together.*
- *Hands down one of the best experiences and it was so much fun to get creative with my sistas.*
- *I really enjoyed the workshop as it offers an informal space to strengthen existing relationships and make new connections. I love that it is such a positive experience, and humbling for those to be recognized in the dedications. I also like how we encourage each other and give positive feedback whilst creating our earrings.*
- *It [the project] was really appreciated and would love for this kind of thing to happen again; it was great we could do a workshop that brings Women together to celebrate Women in community*
- *I hope it sends the message that we care about our women and that we are able to put our heads together and be careful and respectful.*
- *It is about respect, caring and sharing amongst Community*



The women were proud of their work and hoped the publication would inspire and similarly fill other members of the Aboriginal community with pride.

“

- *Hopefully some unity. There will be pride and I hope that is carried by women beyond the book, as many more contribute strength and knowledge too, who aren't represented in the book.*
- *I hope that the grief of our history has a chance to weep and for tears to fall into the waiting hands of kindness. I have seen the injury embedded in our land and in our hearts and I hope for change and for healing. I hope for confidence in our children, to speak for themselves and speak for each other with pride of place and blood. I want to see children stand up at every opportunity for the right to be themselves and when self-confidence fails, may we lift them high, into the beauty of themselves until they are ready to lift their wings and fly.*

The project also demonstrated the potential to build connections with the broader community. Non-indigenous women were also invited to contribute stories of strong Aboriginal women. This was perceived as a privilege and an example of acceptance.

“

- *I was honoured to be shortlisted as a contributor, as I am a non-indigenous woman and wasn't expecting to be considered, so that was a nice surprise of acceptance.*

The women spoke of the hopes they have that the publication will highlight the value of Aboriginal women's strength and contribution in a way that fosters understanding and healing.

“

- *I think that the publication will have a great impact to the wider community and for the wider community to understand or appreciate the work of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.*
- *I hope it will bring awareness, reverence and appreciation to the wider community.*
- *In my more altruistic moments think that most of the broader community are 'Unaware' of the impact of colonization and subsequent transgenerational trauma on the oldest living culture in the world. My experience has been that some behaviours that look like racism (and racism is undeniably a huge problem in Australia) can be attributed to 'not knowing'. Our education system has been used as a tool of oppression for Aboriginal people since colonisation. The absence of the real history of colonisation and the impact this has had is completely flawed. This book is a strong step towards showing non-Indigenous people the way things really are.*
- *Wow! I didn't know that!!! And now that I know it, I want to know and understand more! [re: message to broader community]*

Project Specific Social Connection

There were 32 responses to the question about feeling a sense of connection with fellow project participants. The majority of respondents agreed or strongly agreed that they felt a strong sense of connection. Only 3.1% disagreed to feeling a sense of connection. Proportions for each response category are presented in Table 14.

Project Reach and Ongoing Gender Equality Promotion

To ensure maximum reach, events were published on social media from local and non-local community organisations, community members and Yarra Ranges Council. The book, **Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women of the Yarra Ranges** is available to buy for \$20 at the Yarra Ranges Council Community Links, Memo in Healesville, Yarra Ranges Regional Museum, TarraWarra Museum of Art, Burrinja Cultural Centre and some independent bookstores. Further details are available in Appendix L.

The Balit Bagurrk publication continues to have an impact in the community, given its placement in community centres, organisations, and stores. This acts as ongoing promotion of the gender equality messages that underlie the publication's narratives of and for the local community. This publication also prompts conversations in the community (such as in participants sharing the book with their family), contributing to significant pride and a meaningful experience of collective empowerment and healing for Balit Bagurrk participants, with greater understanding in the community of Aboriginal women's contributions to shaping the Yarra Ranges. The wearable art from the workshops may also act as a conversation point for ongoing promotion of gender equality, and the importance of the workshop was evidenced by the requests for a second (that was initially unplanned).





Workshop products

From the Council perspective, the Balit Bagurk project bolstered the acknowledgement and recognition of intersections of identity (i.e., gender, race, and culture), with the Council taking opportunities to incorporate Balit Bagurk and its messages into other Council projects. For example, the new Yarra Ranges Council Civic Centre, when completed, will have meeting rooms for Council and community use that are named for key themes people from the Balit Bagurk project.

The project officer for Balit Bagurk also noted the value in considering how Balit Bagurk could contribute to and shape future proposals (such as for Belgrave Survival Day, International Women’s Day, the Literary Festival, school talks, and library talks) and the potential for exhibitions and events in local spaces (such as in Council buildings and the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum).

“We are planning for future events when we can. Like holding an exhibition in Council, Lilydale Gallery and Museum and there are lots of opportunities for exhibitions.”

(Balit Bagurk, project officer)

5.7 City of Yarra – The Empathy Project



Student workshop incorporating characters from the show



Early childhood educator & primary school children workshops

Project Description

The City of Yarra partnered with Musical Sprouts to create The Empathy project to explore gender equality for early childhood to Grade 4 children. The Musical Sprouts is a theatre company which integrates music, drama and whole-body learning.

This project included:

- Two experiential workshops for City of Yarra early childhood educators on themes of Positive relationships and Gender Equity in their kindergartens.
- The development of a new musical called **Yella and the Feeling Flower** which explores diversity, friendship, and social and emotional awareness.
- Two experiential in person workshops with children developing on themes explored in the **Yella and the Feeling Flower** musical were presented at two primary schools, Sacred Heart School in Fitzroy and Newham Primary School in Newham, Macedon Ranges.
- Two online recorded workshops for Newham Primary School due to COVID-19 lockdown.

PROJECT AIMS

- To explore empathy in young children, and how by having the opportunity to step into the shoes of the other, we can build respectful relationships and gender equity into education.
 - To focus on the universal nature of feelings, and the awareness that comes from acknowledging and naming feelings.
-
- A teacher's educational resource with steps on how to use the themes and tools in the show as well as how to extend on the workshops if they had **The Empathy Project** in their school.
 - An album of songs from the show, **Yella and the Feeling Flower**.
 - An interactive game for children to play with their adults at home to extend the conversation from school to the home environment.



Images of early childhood educator workshop end of session



Educators as audience members



Images of student workshops

- **Early childhood educator workshops** used creating sculptures and roleplay to explore gender equity and what positive relationships look like.
- **Experiential workshops with children** involved children creating sculptures of different feelings.

Project Findings

Arts Experience / Audience

The Empathy Project incorporated all ten questions from the Arts experience survey as well as three additional items including “this experience inspired me to take action on gender equality,” “*this experience inspired me to discuss empathy with my children*”, and “*This experience has made me more aware of how my child perceives gender roles in the home and their community.*” chosen specifically for their project.

Seventeen parents from Newham Primary school performance who were audience members responded. Overall, parents reported they had an enjoyable, educational experience that made them feel more connected to others, and more aware of how empathy contributes to gender equality and how their child perceives gender roles. They were inspired to be more engaged in discussing gender equality and empathy (see Table 12 for details).

Table 12 Arts Experience – Audience Feedback

Measure	Sample size	% Strongly disagree or disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly agree
This experience was appealing or enjoyable	17	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	11.8 (2)	88.2 (15)
I learnt something new as a result of this experience	17	0.0 (0)	11.8 (2)	35.3 (6)	52.9 (9)
This experience inspired me to support action on gender equality	15	0.0 (0)	33.3 (5)	26.6 (4)	40.0 (6)
This experience challenged the way I think about the role of men and women	17	5.9 (1)	35.3 (6)	29.4 (5)	29.4 (5)
This experience made me more aware of gender inequality	16	6.3 (1)	31.3 (5)	37.5 (6)	25.0 (4)
This experience raised the visibility of women in my community	17	5.9 (1)	17.7 (3)	41.2 (7)	35.3 (6)
I felt more connected with others as result of this experience	17	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	41.2 (7)	58.8 (10)
My knowledge of gender equality in-creased as a result of this experience	17	5.9 (1)	23.5 (4)	41.2 (7)	29.4 (5)
This experience inspired me to be more engaged in discussing gender equality	17	5.9 (1)	17.7 (3)	35.3 (6)	41.2 (7)
I am interested in seeking out more in-formation on gender equality as a result of this experience	17	5.9 (1)	29.4 (5)	41.2 (7)	23.5 (4)
This experience made me more aware of how empathy contributes to gender equality	17	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	35.3 (6)	64.7 (11)
This experience inspired me to discuss empathy with my children	17	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	11.8 (2)	88.2 (15)
This experience has made me more aware of how my child perceives gender roles in the home and their community.	15	5.9 (1)	0.0 (0)	23.5 (4)	58.8 (10)

Note: Total number of responses are in brackets.



Displaying level of engagement during student workshops



Image from Yella and the Feeling Flower musical show

Changes in Social Connection, Community Engagement and Gender Equality Beliefs

The responses for the social connection and gender equality measures were collected before (pre) the July and after (post) December workshops. The July workshop was focused on ‘Exploring social emotional skills and the barriers to teaching’ while the December workshop was focused on ‘Exploring gender equity’. Community engagement scores were not collected.

In place of the community engagement measure, two other questions were collected:

- “I know how to plan and design a gender equality initiative” (Plan GE initiative)
- “I am confident of my ability to implement a gender equality initiative in my community, workplace or school” (Implement GE initiative)

Table 13 depicts the average scores for each measure pre-July and post-December workshops. It also details the average participant difference of the pre-July and post-December workshops for the participants who attended both only. Results indicate an increase in all variables measured.

Table 13 Differences in social connection, gender equality beliefs, gender equality initiatives from pre-to-post project participation

Measure	Average Pre-workshop participation score	Average Pre-participation score with also a post (Dec) response	Average Dec workshop participation score	Average Post-participation score with also a pre response	Average Participant difference of Pre-July & Dec workshops scores*
Social Connection	5.39 (9)	5.42 (6)#	5.57 (7)^	5.50 (6)#	0.08 (6)
Gender Equality Beliefs	20.61 (9)	20.57(7)	22.88 (8)+	22.71 (7)	2.14 (7)
Plan GE initiative	3.44 (9)	3.43 (7)	3.88 (8)+	3.86 (7)	0.43 (7)
Implement GE initiative	3.56 (9)	3.43 (7)	4.25 (8)+	4.29 (7)	0.86 (7)

Note: Total number of participants are in brackets.

* Participants responded in both pre and post workshops

1 participant did not respond in December session

^ Includes 1 participant not involved in July workshop and 1 person did not respond

+ Includes 1 new participant not involved in July workshop.



The Empathy Project collected qualitative data in the form of surveys, audience feedback, photos, video of engagement in the shows, observation notes in the workshops and the artists reflections on the experiences of the parents, educators and students. The ability of the project team to fully complete the planned qualitative data collection was limited by interruptions to the delivery of workshops in schools due to school closures during Covid 19 lockdown.

Promoting respectful relationships through empathy for others and learning to express feelings constructively was a focus of this project. The effectiveness of the workshops with early childhood (pre-school) educators and performances and workshops in primary schools is reflected in the feedback provided by early childhood educators, primary school teachers and parents who attended the school performances and observations by the artists of the activities. Feedback indicates the project raised awareness of the importance of emotional expression and provided an opportunity for children to think about their own and others' feelings.

“

- *I wish you were doing the workshops with our Grade threes. I absolutely loved the show, and these themes are exactly what we need to be exploring with them at the moment. (Teacher)*
- *I enjoyed seeing people understanding how others are feeling. (Teacher)*
- *Their level of sharing was very insightful. I am impressed. (Teacher)*
- *That was an absolutely wonderful performance. I really loved the way you used creative arts to teach children about feelings, and I particularly loved the drawings of feelings that children could identify with and I always love humour. Thank you!*
- *The [early childhood] educators realised how uncomfortable it feels to be put in a new situation where they don't know what will happen next. They are full of feelings and feel vulnerable. They realise that they expect this of children though. Their biggest learning after the sociodrama was that they are asking children to put themselves in situations that make them uncomfortable every day. Being in these shoes of discomfort today made them empathise with their children more. They realised that they needed to take more care with them and understand that the child may be feeling all sorts of uncomfortable feelings. (Artist reflection)*

The performance engaged both children and adults. Parents who attended the *Yella and the Feeling Flower* performance not only appreciated the show as being meaningful for their children, their feedback indicates it also affected them and gave them tools to discuss the themes with their children.

“

- *All of the show provided great descriptions of feelings. Being able to describe feelings through different mediums is a great tool to be able to adopt as a parent.* (Primary school parent)
- *The ideas, so simple for kids to grasp but really very sophisticated. I got a lot from this as an adult. It was inspiring. Highly recommend.* (Primary school parent)
- *I laughed (and cried) throughout the whole show – so thanks for the journey to the bottom of the garden! What a joy, an insightful and empathic rollercoaster you took us on. I hope I get to see the show again one day, I fell in love with every character.* (Primary school parent)
- *The children were so engaged, you had them giggling right from the start, and the timing/shifts between the big musical numbers and the more intimate dialogue felt so right, they stayed with you didn't they?! I'm so glad I got to witness first-hand the themes you explore in the work, and I'm so curious to see how the children respond in the workshops.* (Primary school parent)
- *I cried in the part where Reddy sings about her embarrassment that she has so many feelings and needs to hide them.* (Primary school parent)

It is apparent the subtle gender equality messaging of the project provoked discussion about healthy masculinity, which is a vital aspect of respectful relationships.

“

- *It's not a battle of masculinity, it should not be polarising, we want to bring people together. It's about seeing masculinity in a positive way.* (Early childhood educator)

When working through art to express the challenges of balancing work, family and financial pressures, the early childhood educators were able to reflect on the complexities involved in building and maintaining relationships.

“

- *It can be messy and layered, but an equitable foundation can hold that complexity.* (Early childhood educator)

The artists noted comments made by the children during the post show workshops indicated the project generated some discussion on gender stereotypes and equality. The following comments made by children were observed by the artists.

“

- *It doesn't matter about gender. And when everyone played with the ball, no one was excluded.*
- *The girls couldn't go outside, and that's not right.*
- *Russell was sad, he showed that when he cried.*
- *Boys don't choose to be boys. They don't always know how to play with girls.*

The potential for the show to raise awareness and challenge gender stereotypes was apparent in the following extract from feedback provided via video by one of the male parents: [Video feedback from a parent](#)

“

- *I loved it how the king, as a male, was shown to not be perfect, that he had faults and he was able to find what the faults were and express what his faults were. I loved that you, as the young person, was being shown and having to identify your different emotions because it's hard enough for adults to do it, let alone kids. It's just a beautiful, beautiful play.* (Primary school parent)



Image from *Yella and the Feeling Flower* musical show

Project Specific Social Connection

The responses for project specific social connection measure were not collected during this project.

Project Reach and Ongoing Gender Equality Promotion

The project reported to 105 live audience numbers, 180 views on Facebook, 160 views on Twitter and 1100 website visits. Further details are available in Appendix M.

The project's adaptation to the covid-19 restrictions contributed to enduring resources for ongoing gender equality promotion. The **Yella and the Feeling Flower** musical was filmed (in addition to the live performance) and animated and is now available as a resource for schools, as are workshops for grades K-3. Other enduring resources also provide avenues to continue sharing the messages of The Empathy Project; the album of songs from the show, the downloadable game to explore these themes in the family home, and the teacher's toolkit were planned from the project's outset.

The Empathy Project contributed to the pre-existing commitment and understandings of gender equality at the Council by allowing for new perspectives and new frameworks for future projects. The artists and the project officer involved in the partnership are all very enthusiastic about future projects that could arise from The Empathy Project, and are confident in their ongoing relationship to facilitate this work.

“

- *I think that children's services, me in particular, have made this great connection with Musical Sprouts [project artists]. I think if they ever wanted to trial new things or discuss things, we will be absolutely open to supporting them because I think it was a great initiative. ... I'm pretty confident that we will have an ongoing relationship with the Musical Sprouts, and we haven't planned any projects but gender equality is always at the forefront of what we do at [City of] Yarra [Council].
(The Empathy Project, project officer)*

6 Quantitative Cross-Case Analysis



This section presents the descriptive, quantitative findings across studies. Changes in social connection, community empowerment and gender equality beliefs that were observed from before to after activity engagement (e.g., workshops) are presented in Table 14. The values show the average difference scores for each project that included this data collection strategy.

Table 14 Average differences in social connection, community empowerment and gender equality beliefs from pre-to-post project participation

Project	Social Connection	Community Empowerment	Gender Equality Beliefs
City of Melbourne – Female Futures	0.34 (20)	1.15 (20)	1.50 (20)
Bayside City – Art for a Better Democracy	-0.08 (37)	1.16 (38)	1.00 (39)
City of Port Phillip – Gender Equality Game Jam	-0.23 (22)	1.55 (22)	2.59 (22)
City of Yarra – The Empathy Project	0.08 (6)	NA	2.14 (7)

Note: Total number of participants who completed both pre and post measures are in shown in brackets.

Findings indicate gender equality beliefs and community empowerment increased in all projects where this data was collected. Social connection increased in two projects and decreased in two projects. It should be noted that this was a single-item social connection measure that measured a general sense of connection when engaging in community activities.

In contrast, the project specific social connection measure ascertained whether project participants experienced a sense of connection with other project participants engaged in each individual GEARTS project. It was administered after completion of their involvement in the project.

This data was collected by six projects, as shown in Table 15. Not surprisingly, projects that involved a relatively longer period of engagement with participants, reported a higher level of agreement that participants felt a sense of connection with other participants. In contrast to the general social connection reported above, social connection was demonstrated in all projects.



Table 15 Project Specific Social Connection

Project	Sample size	% Strongly disagree or disagree	% Neutral	% Agree	% Strongly agree
City of Melbourne – Female Futures	20	0.0 (0)	10.0 (2)	45.0 (9)	45.0 (9)
Bayside City – Art for a Better Democracy	49	14.3 (7)	42.9 (21)	36.7 (18)	6.1 (3)
City of Port Phillip – Gender Equality Game Jam	36	5.6 (2)	13.9 (5)	25.0 (9)	55.6 (20)
South Gippsland Shire – Girls Own Space	11	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9.1 (1)	90.9 (10)
Knox City– Framed By Gender	43	11.6 (5)	4.7 (2)	34.9 (15)	48.8 (21)
Yarra Ranges– Balit Bagurk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges.	32	3.1 (1)	6.53 (2)	31.25 (10)	59.4 (19)

Note: Total number of participants are in brackets.

Note: Some projects replaced the six-point Likert scale with the five-point scale used in the other measures. That is, the two options, mildly agree and mildly disagree, were replaced with neither agree or disagree. In order to present an overview of findings across the seven projects, these three variations were collapsed into one response, which we have labelled here as neutral.

7 Thematic Cross-Case Analysis



This section reports the findings of the cross-case analysis of qualitative data, drawing mainly on data collected by the Victoria University evaluation team, augmented by data from each project. The analysis of the data seeks to understand and interpret the experiences of the project officers and artists, along with those of participants, through constructing a set of themes to describe the outcomes and effective partnership processes in the context of the GEARTS projects.

Semi-structured interview schedules, developed in collaboration with VicHealth, were used to guide conversational interviews and encourage the project officers and artists to share their experiences working with each other and their perceptions of project outcomes. The questions were mostly open-ended to encourage a full account of their experiences.

The findings consist of six main themes, as outlined in Table 16. The subthemes provide an explanation of the specific factors that make up the themes and offer a greater examination of each. Collaborative partnerships were essential to successful outcomes, particularly in meeting the challenges of resistance and backlash. Outcomes included empowerment of participants, generating discussion, and spreading the gender equality message.

Table 16 Themes and Associated Subthemes

Major Theme	Subthemes
Empowerment	Learning and growth as personal empowerment Social and professional connection as community empowerment Validation and finding voice
Generating Discussion	Female/Non-Binary Space Cultural Sensitivity and Representation Power and Responsibility of Art
Backlash	Forms of backlash Increased community engagement Responding to the challenges of backlash
Partnerships	Complementary Skills Effective Communication Effective Advocates for the Partnerships
Gender Equality Messages	Short Term Looking to the Future
Working through COVID-19	

7.1 Empowerment

Empowerment, both as a process and as an outcome, was a prominent theme across GEARTS projects. Empowerment, as conceptualised by Zimmerman (2000), enables individuals, groups and communities to gain control over decisions that affect their lives. Further, empowerment involves the “positive powers that people have to take action” and can be viewed on a spectrum whereby simply “being able to access support is a significant advance, giving them important new options”, (p.313, Cornish, 2006) in contrast to the other end of the spectrum of empowerment that provides greater power and emancipatory action.

It was evident that empowerment was experienced by participants and their communities as well as for the teams involved in project implementation. Empowerment was found to generally stem from the opportunities provided by the projects for learning and personal growth, social and professional connection, and validation and finding voice. This encompasses formal and informal education opportunities about gendered issues of inequity and stereotypes, personal growth in skills, knowledge, and confidence to engage with these issues, and developing relationships for a sense of strength in connecting with like-minded people and to facilitate future social change work.

Empowerment through these projects was multi-faceted. Consistent with Christens (2012) conceptual model, empowerment can be a “latent construct with emotional, cognitive, relational and behavioural components” (p.121). The relational component of empowerment can be seen through the building of social capital that allowed norms of trust, mutual obligation, information sharing, and norms both within groups (bonding capital) such as the groups of participants sharing their stories of inequality and how they dealt with barriers (e.g., see section 5.2 Bayside City – Art for a Better Democracy) and across groups (bridging capital) where the Community of Practice meetings allowed information to be shared (Christens, 2012).

An increased sense of agency and confidence, an increase in perception of capacity and skill, and pride in achievements encouraged further motivation to continue work in the social change sphere. Participants challenged gendered stereotypes and their own fears to move beyond these limitations to find the motivation to try new things. Strength and support from new and existing relationships and communities contributed to developing this sense of empowerment.

7.1.1 Learning and growth as personal empowerment

Empowerment of project artists was evident in the artists’ perception that their skills, knowledge, and capacity had substantially developed pertaining to large-scale social change projects. The projects created settings for artists to cultivate skills and knowledge for professional and personal development. This included: project management; promotion of their art; tailoring projects to different audiences; working and communicating effectively with a team; understandings of strong intercultural engagement; working with marginalised or vulnerable people; and identifying and managing stress or burnout. Artists were buoyed by a strong sense of satisfaction and celebration of the accomplishments and impacts of the projects, which fostered motivation to continue these projects beyond initial timelines, or to develop adaptations of the themes and messages in future work for social change.

“

- *I feel like the same applied to me that I was talking about with the young people, that it was the right mix of challenging to have a big reward. (Female Futures, artist)*
- *I definitely learned a lot! And the workshops – at one stage I made a post on my social media, ‘This is a career highlight!’... Feeling as though I was really producing outcomes that were really fantastic, the work that the kids did was fantastic. I really feel as though that was a very valuable and long-lasting experience for me and for the kids. (Framed by Gender, artist)*

In projects that focused on learning about and growing beyond gendered stereotypes, empowerment was fostered for all genders. This was particularly evident in projects that challenged gendered socialisations of emotional expression, which acted to encourage authentic and healthy emotional expression and empathy by developing skills and knowledge pertaining to emotional literacy and universality (e.g., see sections 5.5 Knox City – Framed By Gender and 5.7 City of Yarra – The Empathy Project). This empowered people of all genders to identify and embrace healthy emotional expression that may have previously been discouraged due to gendered stereotypes.

“

- *The men – they wrote really beautiful words. One guy wrote ‘vulnerable’. He thinks that that’s a positive thing to be, rather than feel as though you have to be a macho, no feelings, never talk about how you feel. (Framed by Gender, artist)*
- *We actually had a man, a dad watch the show and he said ‘It was so great to just watch that man cry, and be able to have that conversation with my own children that we also feel sad, we also want to cry, and it’s not a bad thing! (The Empathy Project, artist)*

Growth and learning of the Council Officers was exhibited by their increased confidence and skills gained through running arts-based projects, **“So my confidence and capacity in this space has increased vastly”** (Girls Own Space, project officer) and engaging in a productive way with the community, and also through increased experience in managing negative backlash. Community of Practice meetings were used for sharing learnings, with one project officer noting the value in meeting and hearing from other projects and learning from challenges. Using this as an opportunity to include the artists was also an opportunity to build on those learnings together and to ensure shared understandings. As one of the Council partners expressed, if the artists are not there, they may not understand the full scope of the project regarding the aim to empower the participants.

“

- *So, we had two meetings with all the successful applicants and met the other Councils and talked through our projects. Then we had a Midway meeting again, to learn from the challenges, so if we had one key partner that came to that with the Council that would be better. (Female Futures, project officer)*

Increased community engagement was also evident through opportunities for individual participants to share their experiences within their own communities, empowering them “as social actors in the space, providing something sharable, raising awareness and thereby spreading the message of their own learning” (p.62, Oliveira, 2014). Allowing the projects to unfold within communities as participants explored their own experiences and spread this through their communities is a strength of the partnerships’ reach.

“

- *The trust factor was really slow [to build] and it took a while, which is fine. I think all of the artists were quite amazing in managing that space; we just had these incredible artists on board and all of them were really great instead of just saying “It’s about the work, it’s about the work.” They really were very much nurturing all other aspects of what was going on. (Girls Own Space, project officer)*
- *It was probably getting the young women engaged with the themes and also generally giving them confidence to express themselves creatively. (Female Futures, project officer)*



The project officers experienced personal growth in a number of areas working with the GEARTS projects. Many increased their understanding of gender equality issues by working alongside more knowledgeable staff and learning from their experiences in dealing with backlash when promoting gender equality. This was particularly meaningful when partners or co-workers brought different areas of expertise to the projects.

“

- *I am a scientist and a community development worker, I don't have a lot of arty bones in my body, so my confidence and capacity in this space has increased vastly. (Girls Own Space, project officer)*
- *I mean for me, I come from an arts background and she [co-project officer] was definitely the one who was versed in the gender equality space and I think I have definitely gained a lot from working alongside her and just kind of growing my understanding and sense of what is possible in this space. (Girls Own Space, project officer)*
- *How art is an effective means to promote gender equality, the stats behind that, how many female leaders had been in council – all this stuff is really important when I was copping grief [backlash]. (Art for a Better Democracy, project officer)*

Additionally, many stated that the partnership successes forced a repositioning of the Council's attitudes on art projects for gender equality and also increased learnings on managing project backlash praising the VicHealth resources as a vital tool; ***“Council's understanding is now more robust, it has taken energy and effort but with good outcomes to come out of the project”*** (Girls Own Space, project officer).

7.1.2 Social and professional connection as community empowerment

Connection was a major source of empowerment through these projects. This was facilitated through the opportunities for participants to create and strengthen communities and relationships, and through the project teams' development of professional networks.

GEARTS projects facilitated the development of new relationships among participants and community members. Building these connections with like-minded people (i.e., others interested and active in issues of gender equality) created a feeling of support, strength, and encouragement to fuel future work, both generally and specifically for social change. One participant noted this specifically in relation to combating her *“imposter syndrome”*, as connecting with others of varying skill-sets and experience levels helped her to realise the value she contributes to the game industry and that ***“it actually gave me a lot of confidence that I know what I'm doing”*** (GE Game Jam, participant).

“

- *The other thing that happened – you could see clearly when we had that end project that I described, where we had speakers and so on – was that people had been networking together, they'd been talking to each other, they were gathering information. People were going “Well, I just never thought I could do something like that, it never occurred to me that I'd be able to”, and other women are going “Yeah, you've got to give it a go!” So, you could see that it had worked in that regard as well, that people had networked. That was another direct result of the project, because mostly they hadn't met each other before. (Art for a Better Democracy, artist)*

Others increased their confidence in community engagement as well as building collaborative partnerships with artists who they could envisage working with again ***“I'm pretty confident that we will have an ongoing relationship with the artists”*** (The Empathy Project, project officer).

Providing food fostered connection and initial engagement with young women. This was seen with those of East African descent in low socio-economic communities of Melbourne City (e.g., see section 5.1 City of Melbourne – Female Futures) and the young, marginalised women of South Gippsland (e.g., see section 5.4 South Gippsland Shire – Girls Own Space). However, food was not necessarily sufficient to sustain this initial participation if the young women did not feel there was anything else for them to gain, thus risking disengagement.

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- *Young people are smart, they know if what you are trying to do is that you see them as a problem or an issue, they will resist it. They might come to the hangout to get free food, but they know you are trying to do something for a project.*
(Female Futures, project officer)
- *We briefed them on a bit of the background of the girls and the need for food, you know they're hungry... So, if we could provide a full meal for them in the workshops then that was really great.*
(Girls Own Space, project officer)

Further connections were established between Councils and artists working in the gender equality field, with further collaborations likely once the Council projects had completed. Additionally, there were opportunities garnered within Councils, in which other areas of Council wanted to build on the momentum gained from working with specific demographics (e.g., young female East African /Muslim communities).

When the Councils embraced the success of projects, project officers achieved a sense of contributing to the organisation's capacity to build partnerships with the artists in gender equality projects. Other Council departments were interested in learning from the project officers' experiences, particularly in regard to working with the young East African women and culturally diverse populations as well as the Aboriginal communities and other marginalised communities (e.g, see section 5.6 Yarra Ranges – Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges). Through exploring their own experiences, the project officers can build opportunities to solidify these personal learnings and deepen their relationships and networks with the artists and communities to cultivate valued outcomes for the partnerships beyond the initial GEARTS projects.

7.1.3 Validation and finding voice

Women and non-binary people were empowered through GEARTS projects to participate in spaces they have been historically excluded from, with women committing to stand for positions in their local Councils and with the creation of spaces within media industries that challenge the male-dominance of these fields. Women were also empowered to share and celebrate their thoughts, ideas, and stories in various forms. Although the mediums differed among projects (e.g., film, podcast, game development, mural painting), a commonality was the focus on allowing space for participants to 'find their voice' within the artistic process of the GEARTS projects (e.g., see sections 5.1 City of Melbourne – Female Futures, 5.3 City of Port Phillip – Gender Equality Game Jam and 5.4 South Gippsland Shire – Girls Own Space). This explicit focus of ownership of stories influenced some project's implementation and delivery approach, with one team noting: ***"It was really important to us that everyone got to make their own film. Because [we] know as filmmakers, that's really where you learn the most, and you get to find your voice."***
(Female Futures, artist)

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- *It seemed that the outcome of all of it for each of [the participants] was similar in that they felt that they had worked hard for something and put a part of [themselves] out in the world. There was a real sense of elation at the end of that.*
(Female Futures, artist)



Sharing food through the project processes also contributed to a sense of validation and feeling valued for participants and for project teams. The provision of food was highly valued in GE Game Jam, as participants felt that this showed consideration and care for their wellbeing in a space that generally encourages overwork. In this way, the culture was shifted to be more inclusive and to encourage a sense of belonging. In South Gippsland rural communities, where some participants were living in caravan parks with very little support, the artists took on a nurturing role for these vulnerable young women.

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- *This beautiful woman, Bonnie, she said “no I want to make some food, I feel like they need home cooked food” so she would bring in, every week, this food that she thought about and she put love into to share together and that felt really gorgeous. (Girls Own Space, project officer), I feel like they need home cooked food” so she would bring in, every week, this food that she thought about and she put love into to share together and that felt really gorgeous. (Girls Own Space, project officer)*

In sharing the stories and accomplishments of Aboriginal women of the Yarra Ranges (e.g., see section 5.6 Yarra Ranges – Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges), existing connections both present and ancestral, along with personal narratives, were showcased and strengthened. This process of validation and empowerment was seen through participants’ reasons for contributing to the publication, which centred on honouring, respecting, and celebrating strong Aboriginal women and their families, and through their hopes for the impact on their communities, which centred on bolstering pride, re-awakening inspiration, and creating understanding through conversation. The reflections of the women who contributed their stories to the Balit Bagurrk project highlight the importance of cultural connection and pride as central to the Indigenous experience of empowerment.

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- *To be proud of ancestors and especially the strength and fortitude of women. Inspiring to younger generations, and recognising all the work women do – makes women feel valued and heard. How important activities like these are to bring women together to maintain connection and culture. (Balit Bagurrk, participant)*

“

- *There are so many opportunities for women of various generations to learn from each other – to acknowledge how much our elders have been through and to see younger generations flourishing and inspired. (Balit Bagurrk, participant)*

Project teams and artists also benefited from the VicHealth grant’s legitimisation and validation of their projects and social change work, which contributed to strong motivation and empowerment for future work of this nature. The grants provided the resources for strong project outcomes and encouraged grant recipients to maximise the exposure of the projects. The strength and reach of the projects reinforced a sense of pride in the teams. For example, the ability to document the projects through film and photography was found to be a highlight among the process and outcomes, and greatly validated the artists’ perception of the projects as meaningful and impactful.

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- *Often what happens is, 30 years after I’ve done it, someone will be dragging out some piece of work I’ve done and tell me how important it is... As a young girl they saw this... And that’s great, but at the time, you don’t generally get that really fantastic feeling in your chest where you think ‘Oh bloody hell, this has made a difference!’ So, thanks VicHealth for that... If all they’d done was have that exhibition, and they hadn’t had anything surrounding it, then it wouldn’t have had much of an outcome. It’s clear that the real, true support they gave to the project, meant it had better outcomes. (Art for a Better Democracy, artist)*
- *What I got out of it was the opportunity to do that and to be paid well! As an artist, you don’t necessarily get these opportunities and be paid well for them. I really applaud VicHealth for engaging artists and doing it properly like that, I think that the program and the process and the grants and everything is fantastic. (Framed by Gender, artist)*

7.2 Generating Discussion

Projects generated substantial discussion around the gender equality messages, which took place both formally and informally, and within the project (with the team and participants) and in the broader community. Formal discussion contributed to 'setting the tone' for the project, generally through an early, non-confrontational introduction of the gender equality concept or message. This early introduction allowed participants to take the message forward through the remainder of their projects.

Informal discussion emerged through the introduction of concepts, relationships and rapport building with artists and was facilitated by a safe environment where gender-related issues could be raised comfortably. Participants who were already engaged with issues of gender inequality were encouraged to further explore and develop their ideas and understandings. The exploration of ideas, emotions, and alternative perspectives in these spaces indicate that processes of consciousness-raising and conscientisation were occurring, which can be a powerful benefit of using art to create settings from which social change can emerge (Blanckenberg & McEwen, 2014; Serra et al., 2017). Additionally, unexpected discussions were encountered in often more conservative environments (such as traditional rural communities) that enabled gender equality opportunities to open up and be extended with additional funding given to broaden the message to a wider audience.

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- *They [Commercial company] wanted to engage more with their community and for the messaging and the rationale of gender equality and why you would do this so they actually said to use this space and they talked to the board and put extra money into that. So they came to the party with \$7000 and they have sort of continued to collaborate.*
(Girls Own Space, project officer)

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- *Games can be quite a male-dominated industry. Even having discussions and making art about gender inequality is kind of a radical thing, though it really shouldn't be. That gender equality game jam was the first of its kind in the world... Just making a space to talk about that.*
(GE Game Jam, participant)
- *It created this real sense of togetherness amongst the participants, who got in contact with each other and started their own little groups and their own little conversations. So getting the community behind a project to mobilize for a cause. I think was one of the main impacts.*
(Art for a Better Democracy, project officer)

An illuminating example of informal discussions during the workshops that subtly raised awareness of gender inequality was provided by the Female Futures project from conversations during one of the workshop groups that worked with young girls from East African, Muslim backgrounds. Awareness of gender norms was raised through conversations about what was expected of participants in being female within their family of origin. Although gender was not seen as a pressing issue by these girls, discussions took place about who would do what in the house and the paradox was obvious. The project officer reflected on the perspectives of the participants, recalling one comment of gendered roles in the family: ***"I don't really think gender is a problem, but I need to go home early because my mum wants me to cook even though I have an older brother."*** (Female Futures, project officer)



7.2.1 Female/Non-Binary Space

The female/non-binary space provided by projects for participants and the project team was an important factor for facilitating dialogue about gendered issues and engaging authentically with understandings of equality/inequality. The female/non-binary space changed the tone of the project and the group dynamics compared with other events with all genders that can unintentionally reinforce gendered divides. In this vein, GEARTS projects challenged default male leadership and male dominance in opportunities within workshops and broader project environments for the benefit of those involved. This environment contributed to a notable absence of the typical perceived need to monitor gendered dynamics within groups, and encouraged authentic and deeper discussion, validation, and support, as well as the opportunity to connect over shared interests. Having a female project team also changed the dynamics involved in project management and development to the projects' benefit, which tended to be more process-oriented, organic, and emergent than projects with all genders in the team which might tend to reinforce more 'masculine', rigid, and linear ways of working.

“

- *Most of the people that I encountered on the project were certainly women, right through the process. That's a happy space for me to work in as well. I really enjoy the creative hum that comes from being in a predominantly woman's based creative project. There's something different about that, and something that often becomes nonlinear, the thinking is different. Even the way the book is going to be constructed. It's not the linear page 1 to page 64 process, you can read backwards, you can deep dive in the stories, loop back on one another. I think that that leads a redefinition of how we even encounter materials and records and artefacts in our life, with a more feminised perspective. It's operating on a couple of levels here. It's not just the bringing forward of stories that were traditionally forgotten or downplayed, and given less significance in the male gaze, but also in how we read and engage with these materials, I think that there's a new shape being formed around there. (Balit Bagurk, artist)*

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- *I think it was also really successful in helping people who usually feel alienated by games come in and have a space to create them, which was really lovely. There were a lot of women there and a few non-binary people as well, and games can be so male dominated... It was so lovely, seeing there's a space for these people to come and create their art together and make friends with each other and feel this sense of community. (GE Game Jam, participant)*
- *It was very good ... very inclusive and took into account things outside of the gender-binary of male and female which was very important to me. (GE Game Jam participant)*
- *They were curious to know what I thought about things, and they did want to talk to me about different things. I don't know if they would have done that with a man, because we were talking specifically about issues that they were facing because they were female. (Girls Own Space, artist)*

Whilst the provision of a female space was highlighted as a strength of the projects, especially in workshops, it must be noted that one of the projects included a male project officer who was an extremely valuable asset. He demonstrated great enthusiasm for gender equality work and respect in his interactions with female counterparts. He collaborated closely with the female artist involved in the project and together they successfully countered internal and external resistance to the project. Indeed, he perceived the resistance as an opportunity to advocate further for gender equality. He continued to provide support and time to the project beyond the period of his employment. His commitment and approach to his work demonstrates the value of engaging men as allies in gender equality work. As the artist noted, **“He was so great, and he was the initial person who dealt with all the complaints and so on. He is a really good negotiator.”**

7.2.2 Cultural Sensitivity, Safety and Representation

For projects with an explicit focus on intercultural engagement, cultural sensitivity, safety and representation were central aspects of successful project implementation and facilitation. Ensuring that the culture of the intended audience or participants was represented allowed greater opportunities for discussion of gender-related issues, particularly as they intersect with cultural identities. Receptivity to these discussions and to the gender equality messages was also enabled through shared identities and representation. This enabling aspect was noted especially in facilitation of workshops, in which artist-facilitators enabled informal discussion of experiences of being female or of their cultural group that could challenge stereotypes and harmful norms from an ‘insider’s perspective that was authentic to participants.

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- *I think they appreciated it because it came from someone who is also Muslim, from the same community. If it was from an outsider, they may not have taken it on board. But then, because I was saying it, they’ll be like, ‘Oh, she’s one of us, so maybe she’s worth listening to. (Female Futures, artist)*
- *Me being there, me being in a room with those girls... I think them seeing someone that looks like them, that is important. Before I even talk or even discuss what we’re doing, my mere presence is radical. The fact that I’m in a position to be teaching, to be producing... That is impressive enough. And I want the girls to see that. That all comes back to representation. Being represented in the media, that helps. I feel like the girls really opened up to me in ways that they might not have opened up to others and I think having someone that looks like you in a sector where it’s really white... I think that changes things for the girls. (Female Futures, artist)*

The project officers felt the GEARTS projects provided an opportunity for the artists to engage with marginalised communities such as those from East African and Muslim background who would not normally visit galleries, exhibitions, or attend workshops and allowed the artists’ message on gender equality to be accessed by these wider audiences (e.g., see section 5.1 City of Melbourne – Female Futures). These communities were given access to workshops in the creative arts for the first time.

Cultural sensitivity and representation were also essential for strong community connectedness and embeddedness for work with Aboriginal women and their community (e.g., see section 5.6 Yarra Ranges – Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges). A prominent member of the project team was a Wurundjeri woman who could engage with participants from the local community with cultural knowledge and existing relationships, enabling a respectful, trusting, and safe environment for the community to share their stories.

7.2.3 Power and Responsibility of Art

The power and responsibility of art as a medium for messages of social change was dominant across projects. Artists involved in GEARTS recognised arts as a preferred medium for these messages because of its power and potential to effectively spread these intended messages, through connecting deeply with individual people whilst simultaneously reaching a wider audience. Art was noted to facilitate shifts in thinking through its potential to disarm the audience and take them out of their familiar or habitual ways of being.

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- *It’s just so amazing because it can make you think in a different way. That’s what artists do. They present things in ways that you haven’t thought of, or it might be somewhere in a nook and cranny in your brain, and that artist touches that as an idea. That’s what art does, it makes magic. And can really clearly lay out things that can’t be laid out in any other ways. (Art for a Better Democracy, artist)*

In acknowledging the power of art to provide the impetus for change in ways of thinking and seeing the world of others, the need for care and responsibility in project development and implementation were found to be essential for doing justice to these projects, their project teams, and their audiences and communities. These responsibilities required project teams to be very intentional with their approach towards the tone of the work, generally adopting a standpoint that encouraged gentle guidance and non-confrontational introductions to gender equality concepts and messages. This was intended to encourage engagement and receptivity to these messages and to reduce potential resistance from emerging through participants feeling 'attacked' or disrespected. Knowing the community and the audience was central to informing these approaches, and also allowed for project development to emerge in ways that ensured their relevance to communities.

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*• The messages in there were quite big messages. I didn't want us to shy away from the bigger messages. Using the arts to be creative in how you explore it is very helpful, because it's disarming. People can be taken along for something, and they're likely to open up a little bit more, when you're exploring it in a way that engages and is respectful of the audience.
(The Empathy Project, artist)*

7.3 Backlash

Resistance to initiatives or discourse designed to promote social justice is commonly experienced. Given the nature of the GEARTS program, it was anticipated that the projects would inevitably encounter some form of resistance or 'backlash'. The term backlash refers to any form of resistance towards progressive social change (Flood et al., 2020). In working to promote gender equality, people frequently describe backlash as extreme or aggressive resistance. The resistance can be at its greatest when existing structures are threatened (VicHealth, 2018, p.3). As these projects were funded to support the building of an evidence base for future projects to learn from and build on, VicHealth was particularly interested in the ways this was experienced and how the projects responded to this challenge.

7.3.1 Forms of backlash

We found resistance to gender equality generally took two major forms. The first included denial of gender inequality, with attempts to protect the privileged position of men. The second involved censorship, where the expression of gender inequality conveyed in the art was considered too confronting. In contrast, one of the projects also encountered criticism that the focus on equality for women still sent a gendered message that discounted the discrimination experienced by transgender and non-binary people. This provided valuable insight into the importance of providing not only an inclusive space but also inclusive messaging. The project team for this particular initiative are committed to working with Trans Victoria or a similar organisation to make the project more inclusive to trans people for future projects.

Denial of gender inequality was evident in backlash from the general public, who challenged the gender equality messages of some projects. Some projects received negative social media posts, claiming the project was "anti-male". In another example, an art installation which included facts and figures on gender inequality, such as rates of pay and limited representation of women in the business and political domain, elicited complaints from the general public and local shop owners, with some questioning whether the project was a waste of money, and challenging the gender equality foundation of the installation (e.g., see section 5.5 Knox City – Framed By Gender). The project officer reflected on some of the feedback she received from the public and shop owners. ***"We had threats to go to the media about rent payer money being spent on this work!"*** and ***"He [the shop owner] started shaming me."*** The project officer recalled overhearing very strong comments from a member of the public ***"Oh, it used to be a coffee shop and now the f..... feminists have taken over!"***



In some projects, the backlash from the general public was suggested to be due to it being implemented in areas where rigid adherence to stereotypical gender norms and male privilege are entrenched. This was observed across the socio-economic divide.

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- *Going into that space, into that community with a contemporary kind of edgy art installation and arts practice, and really putting it into people's face... it was very confronting... so we had some of the community who really railed against the installation.*
(Framed by Gender, project officer)

This reaction was interpreted by the project team as an indication that the overt examples of gender inequality incorporated in the art installations were perhaps too confronting for the local community. This led to some valuable learning for the project team around ways to tackle more inclusive messaging, which may be realised through a smaller project to 'test the waters' and engage reactions first before launching the full installation.

Confrontational aspects of artworks created resistance to the acceptance of the gender equality message of GEARTS projects that may be deemed challenging by community members or caused concern about public perception by those with leadership roles in Council. The vision for the Changing Faces portraits in Art for a Better Democracy was even challenged by some participants, who felt that they were being "masculinised" by the project's humorous take on gender, in which women were to wear a collared shirt and costume-style moustaches or beards as commentary on gendered representation in the Council (e.g. see section 5.2 Bayside City – Art for a Better Democracy). In two projects, internal resistance was encountered and support from Council or councillors waived in response to backlash from the broader community. In one instance, councillors brought a motion to cancel the event as it was "**insulting to men and discriminating against men,**" following backlash in the media. This internal resistance was found to compound if difficulties arose in the project's rollout in the community. This early backlash may impact the Council's support for the gender equality message conveyed by the projects. This could have impacted the potential breadth and reach of the gender equality message conveyed in the artwork and, in both examples, required considerable consultation to resolve concerns.

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- *So anyway, we got into that so eventually we got the approval to leave it as it was.*
(Framed by Gender, project officer)

This highlights the need for sensitivity and perseverance in managing backlash. Although there may be an initial leaning towards backing away from the project or modifying the artwork, further discussion and planning allows a more proactive and confident stance that maintains the direction and focus of the project. VicHealth provided early support and resources to projects around the issue of backlash and encouraged projects to prepare and plan for this in advance and offered ongoing support as the issue arose with individual projects. One valuable resource (VicHealth, 2018) that offered methods to support managing resistance to the gender equality message was positively viewed by project partners. However, it is evident more preparation is needed (see recommendations).

7.3.2 Responding to the challenges of backlash

These experiences of backlash posed challenges for project teams, and in some cases threatened the viability of projects. Project teams responded to these experiences of backlash in different ways, with some approaches greatly contributing to overall project success. Art for a Better Democracy provides an example of constructively responding to backlash (e.g., see section 5.2 Bayside City – Art for a Better Democracy). This project received both internal and external backlash and responded with strong advocacy and support; this was through gaining support with formal written communications to other Council members to maintain the momentum of the project, and through the use of statistics (such as number of women in a role compared to men), to strengthen and support an argument when dealing with resistance. For some project team members, resistance was seen as an opportunity to educate and generate further discussion.

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- *I want the backlash, that was great for me but as an organisation they would see that as negative.* (Art for Better Democracy, project officer)
- *The main departments that got involved were the comms team, the governance team and the arts and culture team plus the senior leaders – they were all very supportive of the project and loved it.*
(Art for Better Democracy, project officer)

Dedicated support and a united effort were essential for combating backlash in this case. This resulted in a strengthening of the partnership and a celebration of the project outcomes. The artist was involved in advocating for the project. From the artist's perspective, the communication regarding the backlash worked well in that the artist was kept informed as much as was needed or helpful, given the opportunity to contribute to efforts to respond to the backlash, and then shielded from extraneous detail.

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• *The Arts team were really fabulous actually. They really shielded me. I'm sure there's a lot more to the story than I know, or I heard really, and I'm sure they batted a lot of it away and dealt with complaints... they just really kept at it, at pushing the project ahead. They were really committed to the idea of change. They were great. Really, really great. And it didn't stop at one meeting, it kept going on. People were worried about this, and everybody was worried about that. Maybe it's always like that in the Council, people are so risk averse, I don't know. I don't recall it being this difficult.*
(Art for a Better Democracy, artist)

Rather than backing away from the controversy, the criticism cemented support within the Council management for the message of gender equality, both through raising awareness and discussion in Council departments and garnering more media attention to spread the message. The project officer reflected on the nature of the backlash, stating: ***“we received hate mail about the project and verbal abuse from the general public”***, and ***“people [were] yelling at me saying I was a disgrace.”*** Consistent with seeing the backlash as an opportunity, the benefits in terms of publicity were noted, ***“because it was controversial, it got picked up by the Herald Sun [and] 774 Radio, so that was a big impact”*** (Art for a Better Democracy, project officer).

The strong nature of female project teams was a source of support in the face of backlash, which resulted in a sense of safety and solidarity. In one experience of backlash from the general public during the installation process (e.g., see section 5.5 Knox City – Framed By Gender), the physical presence of another woman contributed to the ability to withstand the negative comments:

“We stood strong and we continued to do what we needed to do, but I was really conscious of our vulnerability” (Framed by Gender, artist).

In another experience of backlash from the general public when collecting interviews for their project, the artist-facilitators and project participants could debrief from a shared standpoint and reaffirm their stance and message of gender equality.

When advocacy and support were not forthcoming, greater challenges were created for project officers and artists, and there were greater risks for rifts in the partnerships. A lack of support in combination with intense negative backlash, in one case, contributed to feelings of being let down by others invested in the project and of feeling overwhelmed by the criticism of the project, leading to a wish that the project would go away rather than a commitment to managing resistance to the gender equality message. In instances where projects were changed or censored in response to backlash, there were immediate impacts on the project team who felt let down by the lack of support of the project vision, along with potential further ripple effects on artists and participants due to the changing information (potentially seen as ‘broken promises’) and the removal or censorship of their contributions.

The ability for the project team to respond to backlash was complicated for projects which took place on private property with multiple stakeholders. The need to navigate the complexities of conflicts of interest somewhat reduced the project team and the Council's ability to ‘take a stand’ against backlash.

Overall, the Councils gained the ability to manage most aspects of the backlash, whether this be through mediation or ensuring governance to mitigate any damages to projects. Whilst backlash is to be expected, it does not have to derail a project if key leadership and Council staff engage in the effective partnership processes described above to find solutions, although in some instances solutions may involve some degree of compromise.

7.4 Partnerships and the Role of Local Council

At the core of each project was the working partnership between Council project officers and artists or art organisations. The role of Council in each project was to provide the necessary support, resources, and expertise to maximise the success of these partnerships. Strong leadership from Council is particularly important when difficulties, such as backlash, are encountered. As noted above, such difficulties were able to be managed when there was persistent advocacy from within Council.

The provision of strong female leadership and support for gender equality in general are important elements that contribute to project success. Expertise in supporting arts-based initiatives is another key role of Council. Community engagement was central to many projects as well as the use of the media to raise awareness of the projects and promote their gender equality messages. These are areas where Council can provide expertise and support. To maximise the effectiveness of projects, Council also has an essential role in extending the life of the artworks beyond the project to sustain the gender equality message. The evaluation was limited in its ability to determine how well this was done. In part this was due to the necessity to adapt projects in response to Covid 19 related lockdowns and social distancing and to the associated changed timelines of the projects and evaluation. However, although all project plans included at least some element of sustaining the project, it is evident that there was a great deal of uncertainty about how that would be eventually implemented (see promising practice principle 6 for examples). This might indicate that planning lacked detail or there was no-one responsible for ensuring the gender equality messaging continued beyond the actual project. Strong governance from Council is needed to sustain the momentum created by the projects.

Some projects also included partnerships with external community partners such as women's health organisations that can provide additional gender equality expertise and experience in managing backlash. Some informal partnerships with community groups were formed during one project implementation when community groups became interested and wanted to offer support to the projects.

Another project partnered with a shopping centre to exhibit the art works. This was initially a very positive arrangement but when backlash occurred this support weakened significantly due to the conflict of interest the backlash caused for the centre management. It may be useful to invest additional time early on to mitigate and prepare all parties for potential impacts of the work so that these can be successfully managed by Council. Partnerships within the project team were central to the process of project development and implementation. Major roles within the project teams were comprised of the project artists and the project officers from the Councils. Whilst each partnership was unique, major factors that contributed to effective partnerships were complementary skills, effective communication, and effective partners/advocates (described below).

Community of Practice meetings facilitated by VicHealth allowed for partnerships within projects to develop and strengthen. These meetings enabled opportunities for the artists to gain an insight into the overarching aims of the project. In this way they could be aligned with the project teams in the aims of the project. When key partners and partner organisations did not attend the Community of Practice meetings, it sometimes became difficult for the project team to maintain alignment in project aims, with the gender equality message potentially becoming lost. This occurred in one project in which a partner organisation was thought to see GEARTS as *“just a project”* without adequate understanding of *“what VicHealth was and what the fund was about.”*



7.4.1 Complementary Skills

Effective partnerships across projects benefited from the presence and utilisation of complementary skills. Partnerships between artists within project teams enabled each artist to identify and work to their strengths in the project. This sharing of skills, in combination with enhanced perceptions of support, played a substantial role in mitigating potential stress and burnout risks. Solo artists, particularly some emerging artists, reflected on the difficulties in not having a partner to complement skillsets and ideas, whilst artist teams recognised the value of shared projects.

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- *We started to understand how we each worked and how our skills really complemented each other. We're so lucky that we have that [strong artist-artist partnership]. It was very stressful at times. It was very reassuring to know that we are a really strong team in this.”*
(The Empathy Project, artist)

Council-artist partnerships within project teams also greatly benefited from effective use of complementary skillsets. Councils across projects utilised the skills, relationships, and resources available to them to enable project development, management, and implementation within local communities, facilitating artists to enact their artistic process and creative vision.

Complementary skills within partnerships worked most effectively when they were tailored and adapted to each project's intended outcomes and audience. This enabled a smooth timeline and realistic outcomes for projects and facilitated constructive engagement with participants from different communities. For example, one project was led by an access and inclusion officer with expertise in community wellbeing and engagement alongside another project officer whose role in Council was to promote the Arts. They were able to bring their areas of expertise and established community relationships to engage with local artists to facilitate projects and various connections in the community to recruit young female participants who would benefit most from inclusion in the various artistic endeavours of the project.

7.4.2 Effective Communication

Effective communication was a dominant aspect of strong partnerships in project teams, as it related both to method of communication and the messages that were conveyed throughout the projects. In relation to the method of communication, face-to-face meetings were found to greatly encourage strong relationships for ease of communication. This was particularly the case for meetings held early in the project timelines. Throughout projects, prompt and professional communication and response through email was commonly central to effective communication methods.

Project officers who afforded time and effort at the outset to set up these guidelines for working together acknowledged they were helpful in building mutual respect and trust in the relationship. This made working together easier when encountering backlash, and project delays thus improving the potential for a sustainable partnership. This is in line with research that contends effective communication and setting out expectations at the initial stages of a project are important for building mutual respect and trust for the success of the partnership (Nathan, 2015; Serig & Hinojosa, 2010; Yassi et al., 2016).

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- *I think we had pretty good communication with email and people set up Messenger or WhatsApp groups as well, so we supported communication through a number of ways. We also had a couple of artists briefing gatherings/ dinners because we got feedback from the artists that they actually don't get to talk that much to each other, and they really wanted to.*
(Girls Own Space, project officer).

Conversely, project officers who did not spend time building understanding of expectations and partnership engagement and agreeing on roles and responsibilities, wasted time keeping track of activities and deadlines as well as losing opportunities to promote the gender equality message. This led to frustration that limited the capacity of the partnership to further the gender equality message.

Effective communication also entailed ensuring appropriate updates were given to other members of the project team and asking questions when further clarification was needed. Artists benefited from communication that conveyed freedom and trust from the Council to proceed with their artistic process, whilst also conveying the Council's investment in the project and ongoing support. Partnerships that conveyed this trust and investment had the effect of encouraging artists to reach out to project officers for support when it was needed, a dynamic that was missing from some partnerships to the detriment of communication and the artist's confidence.

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- *Basically [what worked well for communication] was just that we were very good about asking for what we needed and communicating what we were doing. (Female Futures, artist)*
- *The whole time I was like, 'I don't know what I'm doing, I'm incompetent' as opposed to 'I didn't receive the support that I could have received'... I think because I was getting the work done that people might have assumed I didn't need help. But because I didn't want to look like I had no idea what I was doing, I didn't ask for help. If you come across as confident or come across as you've got things under control, people won't give you that support. (Female Futures, artist)*

7.4.3 Effective Advocates for the Partnerships

Internal advocates, within Council, were enablers of the relationship; noteworthy were female leaders who gave support to the projects. Additionally, Councils that had strategies in place to advocate for arts-based initiatives provided enhanced knowledge and resources compared to other Councils that were more conservative for art-based projects. This allowed the Councils to deal with difficulties encountered and support the projects.

Internal stakeholders that supported the project were important to create rapport with communities, particularly working with Aboriginal communities (e.g, see section 5.6 Yarra Ranges – Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges). The Balit Bagurrk project officer was a Wurundjeri Aboriginal woman, which enabled her to engage participants with trust and cultural knowledge to inspire the community to share their stories. This also facilitated the interviews conducted by a non-indigenous writer for the biographies included in the Balit Bagurrk publication.

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- *I think being somebody of an Aboriginal background certainly helps that engagement and trust and respect, so [there have] definitely been benefits in their choice to employ a female Aboriginal woman to lead the project. (Balit Bagurrk, project officer).*

Project officers found eliciting support from advocates was a significant enabler in effective partnerships, whether this was through Council staff or departments providing resources, knowledge or exercising political power to drive the project forward or the artist themselves using their expertise in the gender equality field to lend their power to manage resistance to the project.

However, it must be noted that though many of the artists were feminist activists, this alone did not guarantee that they would advocate for the project when resistance was encountered. When artists perceive they may be asked to compromise their vision for the artwork and Council must respond to the concerns of the community and/or private sector, difficulties may arise within the partnership. Potential engagement with the local target community and overall project effectiveness may subsequently be stalled or limited. These findings reinforce previous literature that has found partnerships with shared values and commitment to the cause were more successful (Andrews et al., 2010), and highlight the importance of advocates to actively promote and support the partnerships thus increasing their effectiveness (Jeaneret & Brown, 2012). The evidence suggests there is a need to ensure all parties understand each other's needs, values and limitations as well as the complexities involved in community-based projects and the unpredictability of community reactions.

7.5 Gender Equality Messages

The gender equality messages conveyed in the projects' artwork was a vital outcome of the program. To varying degrees, the projects also looked further to the future to extend the outcomes beyond the initial project timelines. Examples include Bayside Council who were planning a Roadshow with the portraits to extend the project to other councils. Others were planning to continue building on initiatives with film making and podcasts to further the message (e.g., see section 5.1 City of Melbourne – Female Futures).

GEARTS projects challenged narratives and spaces that uphold existing power structures, particularly those of patriarchy. Many projects also addressed intersecting issues such as those of racism and there was confidence gained in the ability of councils to support these projects going forward.

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- *...at least council have started to open that up and it's because of the success of female futures.*
(Female Futures, project officer)

7.5.1 Short-Term

Messages pertaining to immediate or near-future social change for gender equality were varied, dependant on each project's intended outcomes and the motivations of the project teams. During project execution, messages of claiming and creating space were common, encouraging women and non-binary people to participate in these male-dominated spaces and industries. An aspect of this was to build supportive communities of like-minded people, and to celebrate the strength and value of existing communities. Messages that challenged gendered stereotypes conveyed the restrictive and harmful nature of these stereotypes for all genders and promoted the universality of emotions and empathy. These messages were used as a foundation to increase emotional literacy and empathy in children, and to celebrate and promote respectful relationships for adults.

7.5.2 Looking to the Future

In looking to the future, many of the GEARTS projects are enduring in their communities, and will continue to promote their messages of gender equality through their community prominence and/or their continued online presence. An important outcome of many of the GEARTS projects are the creation and strengthening of communities that are gender-sensitive and supportive. Female Futures, Art for a Better Democracy, and the GE Game Jam (e.g., see sections 5.1 City of Melbourne – Female Futures, 5.2 Bayside City – Art for a Better Democracy, and 5.3 City of Port Phillip – Gender Equality Game Jam) all notably led to participants finding a like-minded network of people in their community to facilitate future work in gender equality promotion (e.g., a Women's Leadership Forum and women committing to stand for Council in Bayside) and cultivation of inclusive cultures (the latter being particularly relevant for heavily male-dominated spaces such as game development). Many of the projects also have potential to be shared in new ways in the future, such as in the incorporation of Balit Bagurk into the names of meeting rooms for the new Yarra Ranges Council Civic Centre, and in the potential future exhibitions of a number of the projects in local spaces (e.g., see section 5.6 Yarra Ranges – Balit Bagurk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges). The artists behind The Empathy Project are exploring how the messages and learning approaches in their project can be developed into a more conceptualised model for future implementation and evaluation (e.g., see section 5.7 City of Yarra – The Empathy Project).

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- *The Gender Equality Game Jam created a similar space [supportive in the face of backlash]. I now have contacts who, if [backlash] happened [to me], I could call and [explain the situation and receive support and validation of my message].*
(GE Game Jam).



Future work in the promotion of gender equality messages goes beyond extending the GEARTS projects and includes the building upon these as a foundation for entirely new projects. Councils in the partnerships discussed the application of GEARTS learnings for future gender equality projects. One of these is the role that the Arts can play in effectively sharing messages in collaboration with the community, with South Gippsland Shire Council committing to 10 new community arts projects as part of their Covid Recovery Plan (e.g., see section 5.4 South Gippsland Shire – Girls Own Space). Another learning was the significant benefits in working with community partners, such as community groups (e.g., men’s sheds), community organisations (e.g. health services), schools, and sporting clubs. Local connections with sporting clubs have strengthened Council commitment to build on gender equality initiatives such as inclusion in sports. Involvement with community partners for young people, such as schools, provide avenues for future projects to take an early intervention approach to gender inequality. One project officer noted that attitudes of gendered roles were evident even in their project’s audience of children, which prompted her to encourage the Council Gender Equity Team to include younger audiences in their future project planning.

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• I definitely passed onto our gender equity team that I think they are absolutely missing a great captive audience by not including any strategies for young children. They’re all strategies for adults and how we work with adults. I keep saying that I need to start supporting early childhood programs with that gender equity strategy. (The Empathy Project, project officer)

In future planning, many project officers reflected on their increased ability and capacity to engage with the nuances of gender equality work in partnership with their communities. In part, the anticipated benefits were attributed to increased trust and connection with communities. This was particularly notable for the cultural safety and respect for the Aboriginal community that the Balit Bagurrk team worked with, and for greater understanding of language and skills for gender equality work beyond the gender binary, for greater inclusion and safety for transgender and non-binary communities in future projects.

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- And moving forward... There should be a dedicated plan for young women and non-binary people within programming whether that is in workshops or where there is a role that is women-led. (Female Futures, project officer).*
- Gender Equality has always been a big part of my work as an emerging arts producer particularly focused on women of colour and African-Australians. Working at SIGNAL on this project has given me the tools, language and skills to keep doing this work. It has also made me understand the various barriers that young women and non-binary creatives face when building artistic skills. (Female Futures, associate producer reflection)*
- So, they felt culturally safe to share their stories and feeling it will be presented professionally and respectfully and that enhances their feelings towards the community for the future and any community led projects. (Balit Bagurrk, project officer).*





7.6 Working through COVID-19

The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in unpredictable and extended lockdown and social distancing restrictions throughout Victoria during most of 2020, which affected the process and outcomes of the GEARTS projects. Flexibility was central in ensuring projects could persist through changing restrictions and adapt to new requirements. This entailed adapting to digital delivery, communicating remotely, and changing timelines as needed.

Whilst the effects of these changes on the project outcomes are unknown, there were concerns that some projects were prevented from reaching their full potential. For example, interviews with Aboriginal women to share their stories needed to be conducted remotely or converted to on-line surveys, rather than in significant and meaningful local places, potentially impacting rapport and the contextualisation of their narratives (e.g., see section 5.6 Yarra Ranges – Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges). Portraits of women wearing false beards and moustaches were intended to highlight the gender imbalance in Council representation, however, could not be exhibited in the Council chamber as intended, losing the gravitas and impact of that contextualisation (e.g., see section 5.2 Bayside City – Art for a Better Democracy). Many projects had delays and reduced momentum as part of adapting to these health orders.

Despite the concerns for potential detrimental impacts of COVID-19 restrictions, some projects had evident potential for increased impact as a result of their adaptation. In holding an online forum, audience participation was greater than that expected of the initial project, with the project officer commenting “*[the online forum] was still very successful, in fact it was better than we expected*” (Female Futures, project officer). These benefits of ‘digitalising’ and moving online were also seen for other projects, which were found to reach a wider audience (e.g., Art for a Better Democracy) and to have great potential for ongoing dissemination and delivery far beyond that of the initial project timeline (e.g., see section 5.7 City of Yarra – The Empathy Project).

8 Promising Practice Principles



The evaluation also sought to determine whether the projects had incorporated certain characteristics previously identified as likely to enhance the potential effectiveness of arts-based gender equality initiatives. The practice principles included in this section have been identified to maximise the impact, reach, and opportunities for social change in projects such as GEARTS. The evaluation team examined the aims, activities and findings of the GEARTS projects collectively and individually to identify evidence that the practice principles had been incorporated.

1. Capacity to engender understanding and empathy regarding inequities and discrimination experienced by women.

Many of the GEARTS projects explicitly aimed to share understandings and knowledge of gender-based inequities. This occurred through exhibitions, installations, and events for the general public, as well as through smaller workshop events for project participants to learn from facilitating artists and from each other.

Examples and patterns of inequities and discrimination were highlighted in the challenging of the male-dominance in spaces of leadership (e.g., local Council, through Art for a Better Democracy) and in certain industries (e.g., media and games, through Female Futures and GE Game Jam). Another installation in a shopfront, titled Shop of Opportunity, used mock sale signs displaying statistics to illustrate the lack of diversity and severity of gendered inequities throughout society (Framed by Gender; see images from Hotham Street Ladies Shop of Opportunities).

These projects prompted thoughts, reflections, and discussions of gendered inequity and discrimination among the participants, audiences, and the broader community who viewed the artworks. For example, the statistical inequities that were included in the Shop of Opportunity art installation prompted the general public to react in “extremes,” with some people showing pride and others displaying extreme resistance to the message, indicating that awareness and discussion alone are not sufficient to foster understanding and empathy in all people, with resistance to be expected. The ‘Play Party,’ that exhibited games developed through the GE Game Jam, offered a more experiential approach to the artwork, encouraging attendees to more deeply engage and empathise with these examples of inequity and discrimination (such as the subtle aggression women experience on public transport and the gendered nature of children’s toys). The process of having portraits taken for the Art for a Better Democracy project to challenge gender disparity in the Council encouraged participants to connect with each other and develop understandings of this issue.

Within workshops, this understanding and empathy was developed through formal and informal discussion during project development, in which participants discussed their experiences and could explore them as they related to issues of gender equality. This was especially evident in the workshops for Muslim / East African young women who could explore this through casual conversation with facilitating artists who had shared backgrounds, to explore the gendered assumptions behind experiences such as being expected to help cook (whilst older brothers are not), or unpack the use and meaning of the label ‘slutty’ (Female Futures).

The Empathy Project engendered empathy and understanding as an explicit initial focus of their project, rather than as a secondary development stemming from greater knowledge of inequities. This project, in working with young children, focused on developing non-gendered emotional awareness and acceptance and an empathetic understanding of others’ emotionality.

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- *I feel that in order for gender equity to exist, empathy must exist, and an understanding of what it is to be in the shoes of another person and respect another person’s point of view. And to do that, my passion is always about helping people experience the other point of view, not just talk about it, but actually experience it. Through the experience of it, you have a deeper learning in your whole body.*
(The Empathy Project, artist)

Additional to this practice principle was the capacity to engender understanding and empathy regarding inequities and discrimination experienced by non-binary or gender-nonconforming people. This occurred through some teams’ prominent focus on inclusivity for these groups of people (e.g., using non-gendered language and providing pronoun badges through the GE Game Jam project).

2. Capacity to disrupt gender stereotyping.

Gender stereotyping and the harmful, restrictive effects of these on all genders were a focus for many GEARTS projects, who disrupted these in various ways. Stereotypes such as ‘women cannot be good leaders’ and ‘women do not have the capacity to thrive in male-dominated industries’ were explored in terms of real-world impacts on participation and representation with the intention of highlighting the “ridiculousness” of these restrictive and harmful narratives.

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- *One of the aims we had was ‘disrupt the gender narrative’, so political unrest, the media attention, and the community mobilization really achieved those aims*
(Art for Democracy, project officer)

The Art for a Better Democracy project processes and exhibition served to build conversation and deep engagement with this stereotype disruption; an effect that was compounded by backlash and media attention stemming from political unrest. Capacity-building workshops and a call to action facilitated women of the community to embrace their potential for leadership by committing to stand for Council. This effect could have been maximised by including timely follow-up information on the process of becoming a Councillor to encourage follow through on these expressions of interest. Although these were planned and delivered, they were unfortunately delayed due to Covid related restrictions.

Workshops allowed women and non-binary participants to build knowledge, skills, and confidence in male-dominated fields, such as film, podcasting, and game development. This was particularly relevant for areas of these industries that predominantly cater to men, such as technical equipment use that was incorporated in Female Futures. Workshops also provided a forum to challenge and critique outcomes of these gender stereotypes and disparities, such as the heavy reliance on violence in video games. Disruption of gender stereotyping also occurred organically through some project processes, such as in the renovation of a courtyard in the Girls Own Space project, which entailed planning and problem-solving, use of power tools to create aspects of the new courtyard design, and landscaping.

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- *That's a very young women attitude to have about life, that they feel like they are not wanted, that it's a 'Boy's Club', so having that [experience] through this program – letting them know it's just for them. (Female Futures, project officer)*

Participants and audiences were encouraged to sustain their confidence to disrupt these stereotypes through continuing to prominently feature women doing this work (e.g., in project outcome dissemination and promotion materials), and creating ongoing communities and relationships. For example, one of the highlights for the Art for a Better Democracy team was that many women wanted to continue the project in terms of mentoring and creating a community of women leaders in Bayside.

This was an unexpected but and potentially long-lasting legacy of the project that led to plans to establish a Women's Leadership Forum on a similar model to the women business network.

3. Uncovering untold women's stories of our past, present and futures.

Uncovering untold women's stories was a focus of many projects, with some projects taking this message onboard for their primary aims, and others allowing this to emerge as a secondary benefit for participants and their communities.

Art for a Better Democracy and Balit Bagurrk both used their platforms to share and celebrate the stories of notable women and girls of their communities. Art for a Better Democracy used portraiture with accompanying biographical notes to share stories of leadership present and future, whereas Balit Bagurrk used oral histories to explore untold stories of Aboriginal women past and present. The celebration of these previously untold stories was significant and meaningful for participants, who also anticipated that this would have a substantial impact in their communities.

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- *Because if stories are not told, they are lost. (Balit Bagurrk, participant)*
- *“not only sat next to these amazing women, but grew up with some of them, and seeing how we were each influenced for different reasons and having our contributions printed, cements the input we were there to achieve. (Balit Bagurrk, participant)*
- *I hope it will open eyes and ears to how inspirational indigenous women are and always have been. Hopefully more education and truth telling will lead to the true celebration of the oldest continuing culture in the world. It's important to know local stories, traditional names and languages of the place we live in so that we can have a greater connection and respect. (Balit Bagurrk, participant)*

Workshops in which participants produced their own works, such as in the film-making, podcasting, and game development workshops run through Female Futures and GE Game Jam, allowed space for participants to tell their own story through an artistic medium.

4. Shining a light on potentially unhealthy and unsafe cultures or environments (e.g., heavily male dominated sporting clubs, workplaces).

GEARTS projects collectively upheld this principle using a dual focus: challenging unhealthy and unsafe environments for women and non-binary people; and actively creating inclusive spaces and cultures that foster wellbeing and a sense of belonging.

Identifying, challenging, and transforming heavily male-dominated environments was a prominent focus. Through this process, projects worked against the detrimental impacts of these cultures on all within them, particularly women (Chan, Lam, Chow, & Cheung, 2008). These impacts include increased rates of sexism and harassment, increased pressure to conform to norms of masculinity (with paradoxical negative appraisal for doing so), reduced support, lower self-esteem, and poorer psychological, emotional and physical health (Chan et al., 2008; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Jackson, 2001; Jackson, Hillard, & Schneider, 2014; Liang, Dornan, & Nestel, 2019; Madsen & Andrade, 2018; Sojo, Wood, & Genat, 2016).

Art for Democracy highlighted the contributions made by many notable women in Bayside demonstrating the strength of female leadership in the community and their potential to contribute to local government as elected councillors. This was contrasted with their underrepresentation on Council, which historically and currently is predominantly male. The Shop of Opportunity installation, in the Framed by Gender project, highlighted these issues through use of statistics relating to the underrepresentation of women in Parliament and on the boards of major companies.

Female Futures and GE Game Jam aimed to create inclusive communities of women and non-binary people in the largely male-dominated spaces of the media and gaming industries. Participants were empowered to thrive in these spaces through developing opportunities for building skills, confidence, and social connection and a sense of belonging. Incorporating mentors who were also women and non-binary people played a significant role in the success of these communities and collectives, as is aligned with research demonstrating that female mentors contribute to the development of increased feelings of belonging, belief in themselves, motivation, self-efficacy for female mentees, with higher retention within male-dominated contexts

(Bhatia & Amati, 2010; Dennehy & Dasgupta, 2017). Masculine norms in these spaces, such as the reliance on violence for entertainment and storytelling, were also challenged with the promotion of non-violent and positive women's stories.

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- *During the course of this project, and as a consequence of the broader #metoo movement, some of the problems within the industry around sexual harassment were exposed. The creation of an inclusive event addressing gender inequalities provides an opportunity to shine a light on and push back against the unhealthy norms within the game development industry. Additionally, the games created in the game jam avoided the stereotypes of violence often heavily relied upon in the games industry... Despite the games industry being over-represented by men, this project successfully engaged a majority of GE Game Jam participants and mentors who identified as female or non-binary. (GE Game Jam, project officer)*

Girls Own Space explored the extent to which women and girls can feel unsafe in public spaces, with projects claiming and transforming spaces within local communities – some of which had very negative reputations – to foster a sense of inclusivity and belonging. These projects contributed to substantial conversations around marginalisation related to gender and sexuality in the community, resulting in realisations of the positive impacts of inclusivity. This is aligned with research showing the power of critical placemaking to facilitate dialogue for more inclusive community narratives and empowerment and conscientisation of communities (Toolis, 2017).

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- *I talked to young women who were in the park, asked what were they doing, and it turned out that quite a few young people do use that park, but not at night. It was considered unsafe. It had a reputation. The teenagers I spoke to called it 'Paedo Park'. (Girls Own Space, artist)*
- *We wanted to transform the space that exists now into one that was more inclusive and safe for women and other marginalised groups, people that don't always feel safe. (Girls Own Space, project officer)*

5. Validating self and collective expressions by creating visibility of women in public spaces.

The promotion and exhibition of all GEARTS projects in public spaces was central in upholding this practice principle, with projects focusing on sharing creative expressions of women in their exhibitions, showcases, releases, and reveals. Positive community reception enhanced the sense of validation associated with these projects, drawing on the concept of critical placemaking to allow access and transform public places into “spaces of dialogue, inclusion, and democratic participation” (Toolis, 2017, p.195).

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- *The entire project is highly visible, with artwork outcomes exhibited in several public spaces: Boronia Mall, Boronia Library, Swinburne University and Cinema Lane Lightboxes, and through an extensive social media campaign including project films and photos and the potential for use of a poster campaign series by Council as a future asset to use for example when promoting 16 days of activism. (Framed By Gender, project officer)*
- *We had others who were so pleased to see something like this [Gender Inequality Statistics in Art form] in Boronia, like students, younger people usually. (Framed by Gender, project officer)*

Female Futures, Framed by Gender, and GE Game Jam facilitated self and collective expressions through workshops, in which participants developed their own projects as individuals or in small groups. The showcase of these at the conclusion of the projects encouraged conversation and validation of these expressions, contributing to feelings of empowerment and joy for participants.

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- *It seemed that the outcome of all of it for each of them was similar in that they felt that they had worked hard for something and put a part of their self out in the world. And there was a real sense of elation, at the end of that. (Female Futures, artist)*

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- *Certainly, at the showcase – which was a group Signal showcase so there were multiple different groups who'd been working on different projects there showcasing them – but a couple of the students got up and said how much the workshop meant to them, and how much they learned, and one of them said that they wouldn't be up on the stage unless – that it was because of the confidence that she gained through the workshop. (Female Futures, artist)*

Some projects contributed to a collective expression, such as the portrait exhibition through Art for Democracy and the documented oral history book through Balit Bagurrk. These projects were highly visible, with the former being exhibited in the council chambers and online, and the latter being available at many prominent community locations, including museums, cultural centres, and local council community centres.

Girls Own Space worked to claim and transform public spaces in communities with the collective creative expressions of participants. In these spaces, communities tended to interpret the projects as a (very welcome) infrastructure upgrade, with the true gender equality message and validation of women's expression being less frequently identified.

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- *The tunnel [Korumburra] is strange in that it was so dilapidated yet well-known and well used. Many people in the town have had ideas for its refurbishment and what this should look like. Opinion on what should happen in the GOS project is rife within the town. Some residents love it, others think that this is a waste of opportunity. There is very little understanding of the underlying value to participants in this project, (young women being handed an opportunity), instead it is seen by the vast majority in terms of a much-needed infrastructure upgrade. Publicly 'claiming' this space has taken an enormous amount of courage from the artists and participants involved. (Girls Own Space, project officer)*

6. Potential for scalability.

All GEARTS projects had evident potential for scalability and increased reach. The inclusion of online platforms for promotion and visibility of project outcomes allowed the art and messages to reach much wider audiences in a range of contexts, rather than the immediate local community that was the focus of in-person events. Some project teams noted that creating a digital resource or platform for the projects would allow for much greater longevity, as the art and messages can continue to be delivered without a sustained high workload within the project team.

Some projects had already utilised these formats, either as their original intention or as adaptation to the COVID-19 lockdown restrictions, such as the online exhibition of Art for a Better Democracy's portraits and biographies, and in the videoed shows and workshops of The Empathy Project.

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- *We have [the filmed version of our show] now, that we're editing, that can reach people far and wide which we're so thrilled about. This message could go internationally, there's no reason why we can't reach quite a wide number of students with the show and the workshops, and I want to keep making more workshops on the different themes in the show. It's a great starting point. (The Empathy Project, artist)*

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- *I just think there should be volume two! There are so many more stories to tell... What exists in this, the potential in this book is the opportunity for extensions. It's an anchor, and even if it was volume two, or three, or it morphed into something else digitally with podcasts or something like that, I think that thinking about this project as a standalone initiative would be really limiting its full potential to have an impact. I really hope that someone can harness that and be the shepherd for taking that work forward. Because it's got more to give than a simple book. (Balit Bagurk, artist)*
- *Other councils had actually called me about possibly doing a similar thing. So I was going to engage with them to see if that's something we could follow up on. We were thinking about doing a roadshow [of] the portraits. We were putting the portraits in the head office of Council, so more people could see it. (Art for a Better Democracy, project officer)*



Project teams also considered how to expand the reach of their projects to engage diverse groups in their communities. This entailed holding additional events alongside main projects (such as talks, seminars, and interviews), using relationships with local organisations for increased promotion and engagement, and being intentional in approach to foster inclusivity and ensure everyone felt welcome. Some projects also built communities, such as a film collective for women and non-binary filmmakers, to extend and continue the project outcomes and gender equality messages beyond the initial timeline. It should be noted that many original plans needed to be adapted due to the limitations.

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- *We were going to run artists talks and industry talks at the exhibition in the auditorium which is right next to the gallery. It is an easy, effective way to engage the general public, and also to attract young people, because that demographic is something we haven't had involved really in the project yet. (Framed by Gender, project officer)*
- *I think that is to continue, like having a female film collective at Signal with Hannah who was the original artist and I also know that podcasting artists, there's more opportunities for them to run more podcasting. (Female Futures, project officer)*

It should be noted that many original plans needed to be adapted due to the limitations inherent in Covid 19 restrictions that impacted the implementation and completion dates of most projects. This also affected the alignment of evaluation interviews and project timelines, which may explain the lack of definitive plans in some of the above examples. However, the uncertainty may also be indicative of the difficulties associated in maintaining momentum once a discrete project is completed and indicates that the responsibility for extending the work needs to be delegated to someone in a leadership role in the sponsoring organisation (i.e., Council).

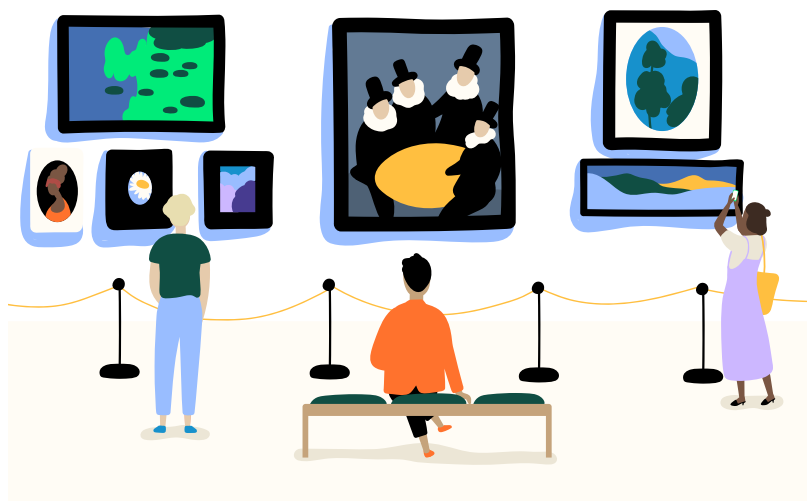
7. Potential for added value through opportunity, publicity, prominence and partnership.

This principle was upheld by all GEARTS projects, in part by the inherent prominence of council initiatives and with the partnerships that were the bedrock for the project development and delivery. All projects provided opportunities for their project teams, participants, and communities through their processes and outcomes.

Opportunities largely arose through projects' engagement with their communities, which fostered settings in which those who had been marginalised – such as women and girls – were empowered to begin and continue community-relevant initiatives. For example, through Art for a Better Democracy's awareness and consciousness-raising of the potential for women to lead in the community, participants and members of the community drew together to support each other through mentorship and community connection. These settings also allowed for social connections to form, for participants to feel valued and a sense of belonging in new friendships.

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- *Many women [are] wanting to continue the project in terms of mentoring and creating a community of women leaders in Bayside. This was unexpected, but a really important and potentially long-lasting legacy of the project. (Art for a Better Democracy, project officer)*
- *I think the best way to do that is just to continually maintain engagement with them and continually look at ways to support them like giving them a platform or looking at projects to help increase awareness, or projects that need elevating. And grant support, so continually just increasing engagement with them, that in turn builds trust and that builds pride, and integrity, and all of those things. (Balit Bagurk, project officer)*



Another opportunity arose from the learnings gained in the Female Futures project where young women from asylum seeker backgrounds joined students from a Melbourne school to plan a workshop and tour of the National Gallery of Victoria.

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- *One key learning was integrating Australian born young women and matching them up with the school [students]. The young women were happy just to have the opportunity to do the art, as a lot of them have very little money. Also getting the connections – they were happy to meet the Australian born young women, not just to practice English, but to hang out with each other (Female Futures, project officer)*

Opportunities for added value through future work also arose through the increased motivation and sense of capacity and confidence of the project teams. Within the council setting, this contributed to changes in understanding of art and community arts projects, and a reaffirmation of the importance of gender equality initiatives.

There was added value evident in the publicity and promotion of many of the projects, which all featured on social media and other online spaces, with some also having print and radio media promotion (e.g., in newspapers and local community magazines). Substantial publicity was generated for one of the projects, Art for a Better Democracy, as a result of the controversy it generated within the community where elements of the project were viewed as denigrating to men. This negative publicity was seen as a significant benefit for the project in generating further attention and providing a forum to address the resistance to the gender equality message.

Added value was also seen through the prominence of projects, which benefited from the promotion and publicity in their communities as amplified through the influence of local councils. Some projects were also highly visible in their communities, which added to their prominence and the value seen in generating discussion around the project messages and outcomes. The scalability opportunities also presented further potential for prominence, notably the display of GE Game Jam games at PAX Australia, the largest convention of its kind in the country.

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- *For a lot of developers, especially devs just starting out, showing at an event like PAX is a bit of a pipedream... Having a space where that can happen is really big for a lot of people – not only making it a space where that can happen at all, but making it a space where games about something different, like gender equality, is a really big thing for a lot of devs. (GE Game Jam, participant)*

Partnerships were the foundation of all GEARTS projects, offering significant added value for the projects, their organisations, and project outcomes. These partnerships within the project facilitated complementary skills and broadened the reach of the projects due to combined professional networks. These partnerships created motivation to continue in future collaborations. Developing partnerships outside of the project team also provided potential to broaden the scope of the GEARTS projects and messages, as in Art for a Better Democracy working with the Victorian Local Governments Association and the partnerships formed with community groups in South Gippsland in the Girls Own Space project.



8. Capacity to evaluate and contribute to an emerging evidence base.

The VicHealth GEARTS funding program has provided an opportunity for the seven projects to contribute new knowledge in relation to what works at a grass-roots level for using the Arts as a medium for promoting gender equality, raising the visibility of women and challenging gender stereotypes. There was tremendous variation in the aims, approaches and level of engagement with participants and audiences across the projects. There were also differences in the professional background and area of expertise brought to the projects by members of the project teams. Access to resources within council organisations also varied. These factors resulted in differences in the capacity or resources of the seven projects to undertake their own evaluation.

The approach employed in the evaluation to identify common themes across the projects to evaluate the whole program has helped address the challenges inherent in the diversity of project goals and approaches. More importantly, the model of collaborating individually with each of the projects to provide resources and support as needed has helped mitigate the challenges the less resourced projects (in terms of evaluation-know how) might have faced in undertaking their individual evaluations. This approach acknowledges the importance of adequate resourcing to ensure equity and capacity, consistent with an empowerment approach to evaluation (Fetterman, 2017).

9 Strengths and challenges of the evaluation



A limitation inherent in the design of the evaluation was that the quantitative data available from each of the projects for inclusion in the case studies was restricted to collated, averaged data. This enabled the reporting of descriptive statistics but not inferential tests to determine the significance of change over time. Some sample sizes were quite small, which also limits the ability to draw conclusions on the trends seen in the quantitative results.

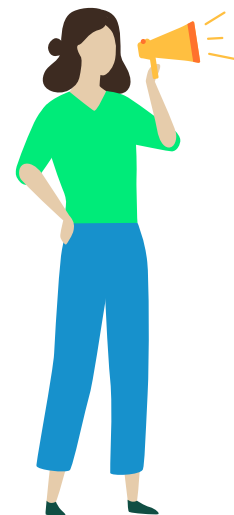
The multi-case study design is a strength of the evaluation. It enabled the collection of rich and diverse data from each of the projects as well the examination of findings across the entirety of the GEARTS funding program. As mentioned above, in the discussion of the capacity of the projects to contribute to an emerging evidence base, the cross-case thematic analysis was able to identify common outcomes and effective processes and contexts despite the diversity of project goals and approaches.

The inconsistent use of measures and evaluation strategies by each of the projects presented a challenge from an evaluation perspective. However, the flexibility to choose and adapt surveys to suit the unique aims of the projects allowed the projects to capture additional information relevant to their projects, which enhanced the overall meaningfulness of the findings. As such, the evaluation evolved from the stakeholder perspective and consequently has greater validity in terms of relevance and practical application in similar settings.

The collaborative approach to the evaluation was also a strength. There was ongoing communication between the evaluators, the project teams and VicHealth. This facilitated effective working relationships, responsiveness and flexibility. This was particularly important in meeting the challenges presented by the Covid-19 pandemic and associated social distancing and lockdown. The individual consultations with each of the project teams provided an opportunity to clarify project needs and aims and explore appropriate means of data collection for each team. Ongoing support throughout data collection and reporting avoided confusion and minimised errors or lost opportunities. It was evident the project teams gained a deeper level of understanding of the purpose of the overall program evaluation and were motivated to collect data that would capture the value of their projects.

COVID-19 presented a challenge which resulted in considerable delays to some GEARTS projects. Face-to-face project delivery ceased, and data collection had to be adapted to suit project modifications. Some data collection was moved to online format. Most interviews with artists and project officers were conducted via on-line platforms (zoom) or telephone, which can impact the quality of interview data. This was mitigated by interviewing multiple sources across the GEARTS projects.

10 Conclusion and Recommendations



10.1 Conclusion

The VicHealth Gender Equality through the Arts (GEARTS) program funded seven Victorian Councils to deliver diverse arts initiatives in partnership with arts and creative industries that promoted gender equality. The seven arts-based projects presented within this report have contributed to the promotion of gender equality in engaging, innovative and sometimes controversial ways. They have:

- raised awareness of gender inequality;
- provided new perspectives on gender roles;
- highlighted the strength, capability and contribution of women; and
- provided opportunities and role models for young women and women of marginalized groups that were inspiring and empowering.

The empowerment of women was a dominant narrative that was evident throughout the varied sources of data. Empowerment occurred through the provision of strong female role models, highlighting the achievements of women and giving voice and validation to untold stories of women's achievement. It also occurred by providing opportunities to women and providing new perspectives on the potential for them to be successful in male dominated arenas. Social and professional connections were also experienced as inspiring forms of empowerment.

The seven projects utilized two fundamental processes or strategies to achieve their gender equality goals. Some projects focused on public facing initiatives where the primary goal was to increase awareness of gender inequality and challenge gender stereotypes by creating artworks that stimulated discussion within the community. Other projects focused on the women who participated in the arts initiatives with the primary intention of providing experiences and opportunities that were empowering and contributed to overcoming the inequality these mostly young women faced. The artworks created in these projects could be thought of as products that attested to the strength, creativity and potential of the project participants. All projects combined the two strategies to some degree. Given these two fundamental strategies have different underlying primary aims, it is not possible to compare them in terms of effectiveness. On the one hand, public facing initiatives have more potential to broadly raise awareness of gender inequality; whether that equates to attitude change is more difficult to ascertain. On the other hand, participant focused projects have the potential to profoundly affect a relatively smaller number of participants; however, the long-term impact of their experiences cannot readily be determined. Overall, it can be surmised that projects that are designed to incorporate substantial components of both strategies increase the potential for change.



Strong partnerships between artists and Council were central to the success of projects. Project success was also enhanced when Council provided good governance, ongoing support and necessary resources from other departments such as media, arts and community engagement. Similarly, project teams were enhanced with the inclusion of multidisciplinary team members. Some projects tended to be driven by a single project officer. This increases the risk of projects being stalled if staff changes occur. Effective communication between partners, maximizing complementary skills and the influence of powerful advocates within Council contributed to project success. Projects also engaged with community groups and external organisations to increase community uptake and embeddedness. This occurred either from the outset as a planned strategy or evolved as the project was implemented. Engagement with external organisations with gender equity expertise enabled the delivery of appropriate content for those projects that included an education element. This is an effective way to compensate for any lack of available gender equality expertise within Council.

The importance of effective partnership and good governance is particularly pertinent in responding to backlash. Several projects, particularly those with strong, confronting messages that challenged the privileged position of men and subjugation of women, experienced various forms of backlash that threatened the viability of the projects. However, each project rose to the challenge and the problems presented by the backlash were resolved. This sometimes involved compromise, with some adjustment to original plans.

This was most likely when other organisations or the private sector had a stake in the project and the ability to withdraw support. In contrast, there is evidence it is also possible to resist challenges to the project that ensue from backlash and successfully advocate for the continued implementation of the original vision. A strong partnership between artists and project officers, with advocacy from Council officers in positions of influence is most effective in achieving a successful outcome. The arguments that are presented to support the project when combatting backlash offer important opportunities to raise awareness and engage allies for gender equality.

The outcomes of the GEARTS grants program reinforce the value of the Arts as an instrument of social change for gender equality promotion. The artworks provide enduring messages that advocate gender equality in innovative, entertaining, inspiring and sometimes controversial ways. The projects provided new opportunities for artists and empowering experiences for participants and audiences. The local Council context proved to be an appropriate setting for gender equality promotion. Councils' local knowledge, community engagement expertise and existing community relationships enhanced project implementation and community uptake. Community connections are readily made and partnerships forged for the gender equality work are more likely to be maintained beyond the life of the project due to the geographical connection and other commonalities. These community-based arts projects demonstrate the potential of art to connect, motivate and empower communities and community members for gender equality promotion.

10.2 Recommendations

It is hoped the findings described in this report will provide practical ideas and guidance to future arts-based gender equality initiatives. The following recommendations are presented according to the various project roles.

Funders

- The model used by VicHealth where Councils partnered with artists/art organisations to develop unique projects was successful in providing the partnerships with substantial local discretion in designing their projects. This model was effective in producing a diverse range of innovative projects that were both public facing and participant focussed and, for the most part, responded to the unique needs and characteristics of their communities. Future projects should similarly be encouraged to design unique projects that are appropriate for their local community.
- Community of Practice workshops were well attended and received positive feedback reinforcing the need for this form of support. Professional and peer support and shared learning is strongly recommended for those working on Gender Equality and Arts initiatives. Funders should consider providing opportunities for Communities of Practice to enable partners to build their capacity in delivering gender equality messages and responding to resistance to gender equality initiatives, share experiences and resources, and provide collegial support.
- Funders should provide resources to prepare partnerships for potential resistance and backlash. This could include workshop funding to develop the project rationale, ensuring it articulates the way the artwork messaging or project activities meet the overarching aims. This can inform subsequent strategies to manage backlash. In addition, support for the experience of backlash during the life of the project is required, in particular for more aggressive forms of backlash. Community of practice workshops provide a forum for teams to safely discuss problems and solutions. Some projects may also benefit from individual support.
- Funders should ensure project proposals consider how the gender equality message of the artwork can be extended beyond the life of the project.

Local Council (or other organisation responsible for leading the project)

- Council should ensure project teams are multidisciplinary, wherever possible, to maximise the effectiveness of complementary skills such as expertise in community engagement, gender equality and the arts. Consider partnering with external organisations to augment gender equality expertise. It is also beneficial for the team to include representation of the target community, particularly for intercultural projects.
- Project teams should have the full support of other relevant council departments, especially media and public relations.
- Advocacy is an important element of project success, especially in response to resistance and backlash. Ideally there should be strong and continued support for the project within Council management as well as from Councillors. Such support from project “champions” should strive to enhance connections within Council and build external relationships and support for the project to ensure the momentum for change extends beyond the life of the project.
- Council could consider various levels and forms of community engagement to enhance community relevance and ownership. This could range from community consultation in project development, to involvement in various stages of implementation to full responsibility for the entire project.
- Consider the naming of projects and the representation of diversity in the naming process to foster inclusivity for marginalised groups, specifically the use of non-gendered language to foster inclusion for transgender women and non-binary people. Gender exclusive language has been found to contribute to group-based ostracism and thus should be avoided where possible or used selectively as relevant to the intended audience (Stout & Dasgupta, 2011).

- Local councils should be prepared to maximise the effectiveness of projects by garnishing the momentum created by projects and carrying it forward in subsequent initiatives. For example, the relationships formed with community groups and organisations should be continued with future plans for additional gender equality collaborative action.
 - Follow up on the learnings from workshops within partnerships such as those with schools and community groups to continue to reinforce the language and ideas raised in the workshops and provide resources for partners to continue promoting gender equality.
 - Opportunities to use the artworks to deliver the GE message beyond the initial project should be built into the project plan and pursued after project completion.
 - Councils could consider creating project archives projects on public facing websites.

Partnerships

- Partnerships between Council and artists/ art organisations provide an effective setting for gender equality work. The inclusion of external organisations and community groups can enhance the scope and effectiveness of projects.
- Ensure all those involved in the partnership are prepared for experiencing and managing resistance and potential backlash. This is especially pertinent if the artwork is likely to be perceived as controversial or confronting, such as portraying the predatory nature of some men. In such cases, it may be useful to pilot the project, seeking feedback to inform the final implementation.
- Invest time in early partnership establishment for all parties to establish common goals and to understand each other's expectations and limitations. This is particularly important if there are potential conflicts of interest. Partners should be prepared to troubleshoot potential areas of conflict as soon as possible so that projects do not get derailed, especially in response to resistance and backlash. See the Partnership Analysis Tool (VicHealth, 2016).
- Engage advocates for social change that strengthen the collaborative partnerships and provide opportunities to empower individuals as well as the wider community to mobilise change.

Project teams

- Good communication and skill sharing were elements of successful project teams and partnerships. Teams should ensure artists are kept well informed, especially when new artists are brought into projects or staff changes occur within teams. Skill-building and networking opportunities for artists, especially solo artists will increase capacity and perceived support as well as facilitate project success. All staff working with specific target groups will benefit from the provision of opportunities to enhance cultural sensitivity (e.g., working with young people, people with disability, and people from specific ethnic groups).
- A multi-platform approach to include online as well as face-to-face engagement is recommended to encourage wider engagement and allow a more flexible approach to participation.
- Cultural safety, responsiveness and representation along with the provision of a female/non-binary space were found to facilitate discussion of gender equality and the critical examination of gender roles. Female artists from a similar ethnic background to workshop participants provided empowering role models. Future projects should seek to create safe spaces with the inclusion of female / non-binary team members and cultural representation in workshop facilitation, to ensure all voices are empowered.
- Strong female leadership was a feature of most projects and is recommended for future projects. However, men's involvement in gender equality work should not be discouraged; they can be powerful advocates and bring many skills to a project. Previous research has noted care needs to be taken to ensure gendered power relations are not recreated when men are working alongside women (Seymour, 2017).



- Prepare strategies and resources well in advance to respond to backlash and criticism. Be prepared for critical or aggressive emails.
 - The use of a project specific email address rather than individual staff member emails is recommended to share the load of responding, remove the sense of individual targeting, and decrease associated stress. Prepared responses can be used as determined by the team to reduce personal impact. See (En)countering resistance: Strategies to respond to resistance to gender equality initiatives (VicHealth, 2018)
 - Art installations that are not staffed could provide additional information, perhaps in the form of signage that provides the context of the artwork and the aims of the project. See Framing gender equality – Message guide (VicHealth, 2021) for ways to frame messages that are appropriate for a persuadable audience.
 - Projects that involve workshops with participants should ensure participants understand the project aims and the ways in which the artworks or activities address those aims.

Artists and creative industries

- Artists should endeavour to participate in community of practice sessions and early planning stages of projects as much as possible to maximise understanding of the project goals and ensure a shared vision for the artwork.
 - Artists who are employed during project implementation for specific aspects of the project such as workshop facilitation should ensure they are fully informed about the project and its goals and seek the information and support they need to successfully complete their work.
- Artists should be prepared for the experience of backlash, work collaboratively with partners to seek solutions if it occurs and potentially destabilises the project, and seek support from partners if it is experienced as stressful.
- Although not essential to project success, those artists who worked with other artists noted the benefits in terms of providing support, mitigating stress and utilising complementary skills. If feasible, artists should consider partnering with other artists.

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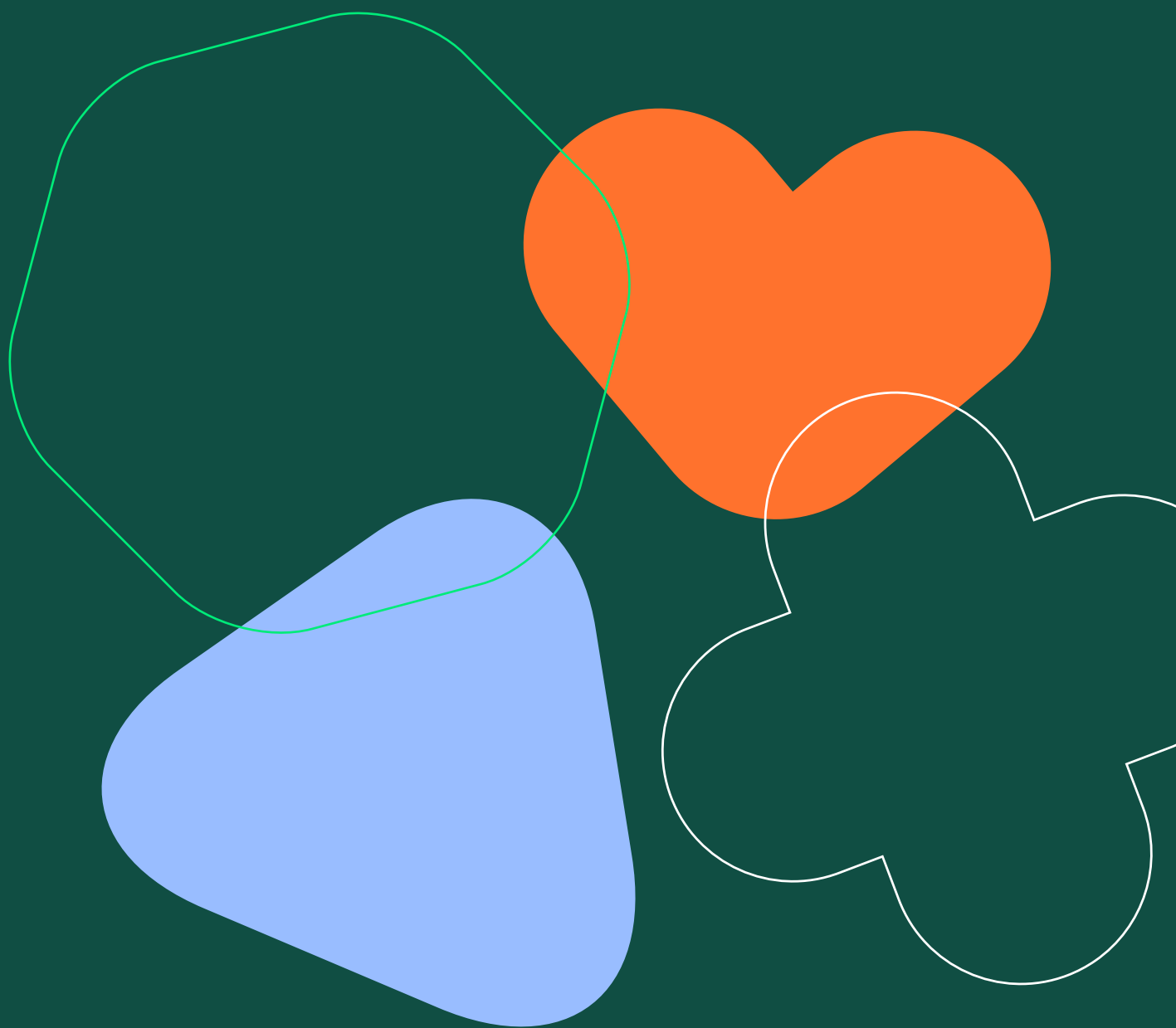
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Gender Equality Through the Arts *Appendices*



Appendix A

Methodology

The overall framework for the evaluation was informed by a participatory, collaborative approach to the evaluation. A participative approach to evaluation is one where the evaluators work in collaboration with partners to facilitate and support participants in owning and understanding the evaluation process. It recognizes the importance of incorporating the perspective of stakeholders into evaluation, providing opportunities to make enhancements or improvements to the program as well as providing partners the space for self-evaluation and self-determination (Patton, 2002). This approach facilitates stakeholder 'buy-in' giving them a sense of ownership of the evaluation process and as a result, they are more likely to implement any necessary changes (Núñez, & Úcar, 2013). In this regard, it also uses elements of an empowerment evaluation approach whereby people learn to "confront the status quo, unpacking myths, rejecting dehumanization, and no longer blindly accepting the "truth" about how things are or can be" (Fetterman, 2017).

This participatory approach establishes a framework for dialogue and discussion between all parties involved, where the role "is not to control the actors: but to make them responsible participants" (Zuñiga, 2000, p.215). Furthermore, according to Suarez-Balcazar et al. (2003), elements such as trust, respect and recognition of the organization and community members are key elements in the initial stages of the process. Ensuring the needs and expectations of all stakeholders is included in the planning phase as well as involvement in decision making stages. The premise of participatory evaluation (and empowerment and collaborative evaluation) is that at various levels it can promote, either directly or indirectly, the involvement of stakeholders in the evaluative process. Those involved in the evaluative process "learn from the process itself and make changes in the evaluated program or their practices on the basis of the evaluative process and not on the results obtained at the end of the evaluation" (Jacob, Ouvrard, & Bélanger, 2011, p.114).

However, these methods of evaluation do not preclude the involvement of external experts. Instead, the expert becomes a collaborator and plays a facilitating role in partnership with the community or program staff, using the local expertise of the people in each community to decide in collaboration with them how the evaluation will be conducted. Participatory evaluation thus combines the expertise in evaluation of the facilitators with the knowledge of community members about their own lives and circumstances.

The collaborative process

Ethics approval was granted by the Victoria University Human Research Ethics Committee prior to data collection. Collaboration commenced with a meeting between VicHealth stakeholders and the Victoria University evaluation team to facilitate a deeper shared understanding of the evaluation needs. This was followed by regular meetings throughout the duration of the GEARTS program between the evaluation lead researcher and VicHealth project manager. These meetings provided a forum for open-communication, information exchange and resolving any problems or concerns that arose. The evaluators also worked closely with the individual project teams, commencing with participation in the community of practice sessions hosted by VicHealth. The first community of practice provided an opportunity to meet the project teams, learn more about the projects' aims and plans, provide some general evaluation information on types and sources of data and describe the role of the evaluators. The project teams provided an update on their progress and shared practice wisdom related to project implementation, whilst the evaluators participated informally. It was planned that the evaluators would have a more formal role in the third community of practice with a focus on qualitative data analysis. Unfortunately, this was cancelled due to Covid-19 social distancing requirements and related resources were distributed via email instead.

Appendix A continued

Between the first and second community of practice, the evaluators met individually with each project team to support refinement of their evaluation plans. In collaboration with VicHealth and following feedback from the project teams, a set of measurements and data collation resources was provided to the teams from which they could choose the most suitable means of collecting quantitative data for their project. The evaluators were also available for further consultation with project teams on a needs basis. This included support via email, phone and additional meetings. Due to Covid-19 social distancing requirements, most of these meetings occurred via zoom. Collaboration included selection and adaptation of appropriate measures, qualitative data collection, for example developing interview or open-ended survey questions, and support with managing and collating the projects' quantitative data.

Multi-case study design

Case study research focuses on understanding all there is to learn from and about a particular case or cases. A case can be a policy, organisation, individual, program or community. The case study approach is appropriate for this evaluation because it seeks to understand how the Arts can be used to raise awareness of gender inequality and the ways in which the social connection and wellbeing of participants is enhanced by their involvement in the projects. This focus on how and why contrasts with the control or manipulation of relevant behaviours or variables in traditional, positivist research approaches (Tellis, 1997; Yin, 2009). Case study research emphasises the intrinsic value of each case while also valuing the possibility of developing knowledge that can be transferred to other settings. Each individual arts project forms a case study.

A mixed-methods, multi-case study design was chosen to evaluate the Gender Equality through the Arts (GEARTS) program. Mixed-methods design involves the collection of both quantitative and qualitative data to enhance the depth and breadth of information collected from each case. A multi-case study approach enables comparison and contrast of issues emerging from one case with issues emerging from other cases. Utilisation of multiple cases allows for identifying and framing what is common and consistent across cases, as well as what is unique or particular about a case (Stake, 1994).

Project grant recipients were responsible for the evaluation of their projects under their funding agreements. With support from the evaluation team, they collected quantitative data related to outcomes, and qualitative data related to participant experiences. A reporting template was provided to each project to produce its own evaluation report. These de-identified, collated findings were then shared with the evaluation team to inform the overall evaluation of the GEARTS grant program. Quantitative collated data was used for a descriptive analysis of program reach and short-term impact. Qualitative data provided feedback on participant and audience experiences.

The Victoria University evaluation team collected additional qualitative data in the form of individual interviews with artists and local Council projects officers involved in each of the seven arts projects. Thematic cross-case analysis was undertaken to examine artist and project officers' experience of implementing the arts initiatives and perceptions of the effect the projects had on participants, audiences and stakeholders. Analysis also focused on identifying effective partnership practices and any barriers to project implementation.

Cross case analysis was also undertaken to document the reach and impact of each project and to provide evidence of the impact of the overall GEARTS program. The effectiveness of practices employed by grant recipients in achieving project aims and the effectiveness of the partnership model were also evaluated.

The quantitative and qualitative aspects of the evaluation designs, although common, were dependent on each project's characteristics. Some projects had relatively high numbers of participants with short-term engagement and others had several different groups participating in various workshops over a longer time. Some projects had several partners and others only had one with various project responsibilities. Taking these differences into account, the sources of data available from each project varied.

Individual case-study data sources

Consistent with the evaluation design described above, there were multiple sources and types of data. However, due to the considerable variation in project aims and design, not all sources and types of data were appropriate for every project. In some partnerships, artists worked alone or in small groups to create the artwork, which was then presented to audiences. In these instances, *audience* feedback was sought. Other projects engaged with members of specific populations within the community who contributed to the artwork.

These *project participants* provided qualitative feedback and completed quantitative questionnaires. The content of the questionnaires varied depending on the art experience and the duration of participant engagement. Where engagement was brief, for example in the case of a single workshop, measurement occurred after participation. In projects with ongoing engagement, pre and post measurement occurred. Table 17 summarises the types of data collected by each project.

Table 17 Project and Data Sources

Council	Project	Participant Quantitative	Participant Qualitative	Audience
City of Melbourne	Female Futures	Pre – post Questionnaire (20*)	Post workshops survey with open-ended questions. Two hour reflection session (film workshop series)	Three items from Arts Experience Survey (30) posted to Female Futures website. Creatives Forum on-line survey with comments
Bayside City	Art for a Better Democracy	Pre – post Questionnaire (39*) Arts Experience Survey (158)	Interviews or focus groups (29)	Social media and website engagement
City of Port Phillip	Gender Equality Game Jam	Pre – post Questionnaire (22*)	Post events survey with open ended questions (27). Vox pops interviews	Arts Experience Survey (19) with comments
South Gippsland Shire	Girls Own Space	Arts Experience Survey (11)	Video interviews (44 workshop participants)	Social media public commentary
Knox City	Framed by Gender	Post only Questionnaire (44)		Social media public commentary
Yarra Ranges	Balit Bagurrk: Strong Aboriginal Women of the Yarra Ranges	Post only Questionnaire (31)	Survey with open-ended questions following completion of publication (24)	NA. (due to unavoidable delays, data was reported prior to public release of the Balit Bagurrk book)
City of Yarra	The Empathy Project	Pre – post Questionnaire (7*)	Post workshop survey with open-ended questions.	Qualitative audience feedback from parents and school teachers. Feedback (collected by project from show audience)

Note: Total number of respondents are shown in brackets.

* Total number of participants with a Pre and Post workshop response

Measures

In consultation with VicHealth, and after feedback from the project teams, a number of measures were sourced for use by the projects. These included impact measures to assess levels of change in targeted attitudes and social connection of those who participated in the projects across time. This was then augmented by the findings of any qualitative investigation undertaken by each project to understand participant or audience experience of the arts projects.

A post-event survey was available to collect audience reactions. Due to Covid-19 social distancing requirements and/or lockdown, some events were cancelled, with subsequent alternative means of displaying the artworks. This limited the ability of some projects to collect audience responses.

Each project opted to use some or all the audience and participant measures based on their understanding of what was appropriate for their participant cohort. Although consultation on these decisions was provided by the evaluation team, consistent with the collaborative, participatory approach of this evaluation, where the expertise of project teams was recognised and valued, the final decision was theirs to make. Some projects added their own specific questions based on the unique aim and characteristics of their projects. These modifications may have detracted from the ability to quantitatively compare projects. However, it was considered more meaningful to collect project specific information.

Project reach statistics were also collated and may have included live audience numbers, website data, social media statistics and other evidence of media coverage.

Arts Experience Survey

The Arts Experience Survey was adapted from the Erie Arts and Culture, Cultural Experience Questionnaire <https://www.erieartsandculture.org/blog/cultivating-meaningful-cultural-experiences>. It was modified to focus on the gender equality message of the arts experience rather than a general cultural experience. The survey contains ten items scored on a five-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree, with a higher score reflecting stronger agreement with each item (See Appendix B). The number and percentages for each response option for each item were calculated.

Example questionnaire items include, “This experience was appealing or enjoyable,” and “this experience challenged the way I think about the role of men and women.” Some projects opted not to use all the items, whilst others added their own project-specific questions.

It was originally planned for it to be used by the GEARTS projects to evaluate audience experience following a performance or exhibition. However, it was also used by projects that engaged with participants, but engagement was too brief (e.g., a single workshop) to warrant using the pre-test – post-test questionnaires in the next section. Some projects also used it in addition to the pre-test – post-test measures at the conclusion of participant engagement to gain feedback on the overall experience.

Social Connection

The social connection measure was a single-item measurement provided by VicHealth with the statement, “When I engage in community activities, I feel a strong sense of connection with the people I spend time with.”

Project participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with this statement before (pre) and after (post) the project activity (such as a workshop) using a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). The average of pre- and post- scores were then calculated. Where participants had completed both pre and post administrations, the average differences between the pre- and post- scores were also calculated (See Appendix C).

There was also a project specific social connection measure that VicHealth requested each project to collect. The single item was “When I engaged in [each project inserted the specific project activity, e.g., the GE Game Jam], I felt a strong sense of connection with the people I spent time with.” It was administered after the project activity.

Project participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with this statement using a six-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 6 = strongly agree). The total number of responses and percentage for each response option were calculated (See Appendix D).

It should be noted, some projects opted for a five-point scale, consistent with the other measures used.

Community Empowerment Measure

The community empowerment measure was adapted from two measures from Cohen (2006) and Petersen et al., (2011) to measure participants' beliefs about their sense of agency within their communities. It contains four items scored on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Example questionnaire items include "My role in the community is valued" and "I feel that I have an opportunity to have a say in my community."

Project participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the statements before (pre) and after (post) their participation in the project (such as in a series of workshops). Item scores were totalled for each participant. A higher score reflects a greater sense of agency. The average of pre- and post- scores were then calculated. Average differences between the pre- and post- scores were also calculated (See Appendix E).

Gender Equality Beliefs Measure

The gender equality beliefs measure was adapted from the Preventing Violence Against Women (PVAW) efficacy scale (Flood, 2018) to measure participants understanding, concern and confidence in promoting gender equality. It contains five items measured on a five-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Example questionnaire items include "I see gender inequality as a cause for concern" and "I feel confident in explaining why gender equality is important for everyone."

Project participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each of the statements before (pre) and after (post) project engagement. Item scores were totalled for each participant. A higher score indicates more proactive beliefs about gender equality. The average of pre- and post- scores were then calculated. Average differences between the pre- and post- scores were also calculated (See Appendix F).

Qualitative data

In addition to the data collected and collated by each project team, qualitative data was collected by the Victoria University research team, via conversational semi-structured interviews with Council project officers and artist partners involved in the design, implementation and delivery of the projects. A total of nine interviews with Council project officers were conducted from the seven Councils, including eight females and one male. Ten female artists involved in the seven projects were interviewed. One interview was conducted with two artists who worked closely together on one of the projects. All other interviews were individual.

The qualitative data incorporated the audio taped individual interviews, augmented with written reflections reported by the partners about their experiences of working in the projects. Interviews were recorded at the Council premises or other location deemed appropriate by project partners. Interviews conducted after the implementation of Covid-19 social distancing requirements and lockdown were conducted via zoom or telephone.

After transcribing data, thematic analysis was used to understand experiences of collaboration and participation in partnerships, and to gain a deeper understanding of mechanisms of change across the case studies. Thematic analysis involved: data familiarisation; assigning preliminary codes to describe the content; identifying patterns or themes; cross-validation of themes with other researchers in the evaluation team and reporting of consistent themes relevant to the overall grants program.

In particular, the processes and factors that contribute to a successful partnership between the local government grant recipients and the arts and creative industries they partnered with, as well as perceptions of the feasibility of continued collaboration for social change in the gender equality field were investigated. Partners' perceptions of project outcomes and the experiences of the participants who engaged in the project activities were also explored.

Appendix B

Arts Experience Survey

What is your level of agreement for the following statements about your experience on the project?
For each item select the response that best describe the way you feel.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
This experience was appealing or enjoyable	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I learnt something new as a result of this experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This experience inspired me to support action on gender equality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This experience challenged the way I think about the role of men and women	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This experience made me more aware of gender inequality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This experience raised the visibility of women in my community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I felt more connected with others as result of this experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
My knowledge of gender equality increased as a result of this experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
This experience inspired me to be more engaged in discussing gender equality	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I am interested in seeking out more information on gender equality as a result of this experience	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix C

Differences in Social Connection from Pre-to-Post Project Participation

What is your level of social connection? Select the response that best describe the way you feel.

Instructions: The participant's pre and post project participation response values are collected.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Mildly disagree	Mildly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
When I engage in community activities, I feel a strong sense of connection with the people I spend time with	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix D

Project Specific Social Connection Feedback

What is your level of social connection with people spent on this project? Select the response that best describe the way you feel.

Instructions: The participant's pre and post project participation response values are collected.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Mildly disagree	Mildly agree	Agree	Strongly agree
When I engaged in this specific project activity, I felt a strong sense of connection with the people I spent time with.	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix E

Differences in Community Empowerment from Pre-to-Post Project Participation

What is your level of agreement for the following statements about your sense of community empowerment? For each item select the response that best describe the way you feel.

Instructions: The participant's pre and post project participation response values are collected.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
My role in the community is valued	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
I feel that I have an opportunity to have a say in my community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
It is important to me that I actively participate in local issues	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Even if it is hard, I still believe I can change my community	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

Appendix F

Differences in Gender Equality Beliefs from Pre-to-Post Project Participation

What is your level of agreement for the following statements about gender equality beliefs? For each item select the response that best describe the way you feel.

Instructions: The participant's pre and post project participation response values are collected.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neither agree or disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
I have a good understanding of some of the social problems associated with gender inequality	0.	1.	2.	3.	4.
I see gender inequality as a cause for concern	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.
I feel confident in explaining why gender equality is important for everyone	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.
I know how to engage others in conversations about gender equality	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.
I am familiar with strategies for promoting gender equality (Excluded in survey)	20.	21.	22.	23.	24.
I know how to plan and design a gender equality initiative (Excluded in survey)	25.	26.	27.	28.	29.
I am confident of my ability to implement a gender equality initiative in my community, workplace or school. (Excluded in survey)	30.	31.	32.	33.	34.

Appendix G

Project Reach for City of Melbourne – Female Futures

Activity	Live Audience Numbers	Social Media statistics	Website statistics	Others
Workshop Drum Podcast facilitated by Ayan	25	n/a	n/a	
Workshop Drum Podcast facilitated by Ayan	80	n/a	n/a	
SIGNAL Summer – Film	11	Films viewed on FB up to 10th October – 152	See FF website	
SIGNAL Summer – Sound School	9	n/a	n/a	
SIGNAL – Female Film Collective	9	Films viewed on FB up to 10th October – 891	See FF website	
SIGNAL – Creatives Forum	29	1,100 Facebook views	n/a	
Bittersweet Podcast	12	2,200 Facebook views	n/a	
Women and Film and Creativity Launch event	446	539 views on FB	n/a	
Creating in Confinement Launch Event	437	494 views on FB	n/a	
Female Futures website	n/a		2633 up to 30 Sept 2020	Total video views 5615 up to 30 Sept 2020

The Website features all the films created as well as artist bios and links to the panel discussions.

All online webinars were streamed to multiple platforms such as Facebook Live and Youtube Live.

Appendix H

Project Reach for Bayside City – Art for a Better Democracy


Project reach was captured through website data, social media statistics, live audience numbers, video views, downloads and hard copy mail distribution. The below table provides clear overview of the project reach for *Changing Faces: Reframing Women in Local Democracy*. Social media was measured through 'reach' which refers to the number of people who viewed the post and 'engagement' which refers to the number of interactions people had with the post such as likes, comments and shares.

Activity	Live Audience Numbers	Social Media statistics	Website statistics	Others
Photography session with Ponch Hawkes	171	–	–	171 local women had their photograph taken by Ponch Hawkes in October 2019.
Let's Talk Bayside Magazine Article – Edition June/July 2019	40,000	–	–	40,000 hard copies distributed to Bayside households. <i>(This is a hard copy magazine which is sent to all households in the Bayside municipality).</i>
Let's Talk Bayside Magazine Article – Edition February/March 2020	40,000	–	–	40,000 hard copies distributed to Bayside households.
The Herald Sun – 20 December 2019 – 'Hair hair, Mrs Mayor'	863,000	–	–	Changing Faces was featured in The Herald Sun on the 20 December 2019 and online. As one of Victoria's most popular newspapers, The Herald sun has an average daily readership of 863,000.
Social Media Post – 9/08/19	8839 reach	1969 engagement	–	https://www.facebook.com/baysidecityCouncil/posts/2448482108538309
Social Media Post – 28/04/20	4724 reach	392 engagement	–	https://www.facebook.com/baysidecityCouncil/posts/3024548584264989
Social Media Post – 5/05/20	2225 reach	52 engagement	–	https://www.facebook.com/baysidecityCouncil/posts/3041687672551080
Social Media Post – 7/05/20	18074 reach	2699 engagement	–	https://www.facebook.com/baysidegallery/videos/858140414706196/

Appendix H continued

Activity	Live Audience Numbers	Social Media statistics	Website statistics	Others
Social Media Post – 10/05/20	4664 reach	545 engagement	–	https://www.facebook.com/baysidecityCouncil/posts/3050910998295414
Social Media Post – 19/05/20	2313 reach	56 engagements	–	https://www.facebook.com/baysidecityCouncil/posts/3077869388932908
Social Media Post – 17/06/20	2678 reach	142 engagements	–	https://www.facebook.com/baysidecityCouncil/posts/3171092349610611
Social Media Post – 2/09/20	11038 reach	908 engagement	–	https://www.facebook.com/baysidecityCouncil/posts/2495696530483533
Social Media Post – 18/09/20	15689 reach	1059 engagement	–	https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=503273007156399
Live Facebook event with Ponch Hawkes – 7/05/20. This was streamed lived across both Bayside City Council page and Bayside’s Art Gallery page	2663 reach Council + 5139 reach gallery	41 engagement Council + 757 engagement gallery	–	https://www.facebook.com/baysidecityCouncil/posts/3045932172126630 https://www.facebook.com/baysidegallery/videos/858140414706196
Social Display AD for Expression of Interest to run for Council	59407 impressions	86 click through	–	Note: this was the third party ad news.com – they only report on impressions.
Facebook lead generation ad	17684 reach	54 click though	–	
Bayside Council Website – Changing Faces Project page – General exhibition page	–	–	Website views: 3,585	https://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/changing-faces-exhibition
Changing Faces Project page – Meet the participants – on Bayside Council Website			Website views: 3,217	https://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/changing-faces-individual-portraits
Changing Faces Exhibition Catalogue	150 hard copies	–	Website downloads: 18	https://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/changing_faces_cat_1905_v4_final.pdf
Register to run for Council form	Form completed via Facebook: 51	–	Website form completed: 17	
Main exhibition video – Online launch exhibition video with Ponch Hawkes and Mayor	440 views	–	–	https://youtu.be/pNV9IShq7Xo

Appendix H continued

Activity	Live Audience Numbers	Social Media statistics	Website statistics	Others
Meet the participant videos (3) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Why did you choose to take part? • What do you think of the project? • Participants discuss gender quality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 55 views • 31 views • 39 views 	–	–	Video 1: https://youtu.be/dD2B2G6YoTQ Video 2: https://youtu.be/WvQelGAVtWI Video 3: https://youtu.be/2lyKJXosDgM
Delivery of an online workshop with the Victorian Local Government Association to support women in running for Council elections.	8 participants			
Delivery of an online celebration, networking and concluding event for participants. Katherine Fox key note speaker and 5 participants shared their leadership journeys.	35	–	–	A total of 50 participants registered to attend and 35 participants attended the event. All registered participants received a copy of the recording. Event hosted online 27th August 2020.

Key events and activities included:

1. Photographing 171 local women nominated as leaders of Bayside and asking them to wear a fake moustache in the photograph as a way to humorously disrupt Bayside City Council's gender narrative. Each photograph was framed and displayed on the walls of the Council Chambers, replacing all previous male mayors' portraits.
2. Hosting a photography exhibition to showcase the 171 women who had their photographs taken by artist Ponch Hawkes. Due to COVID-19 the photography exhibition was moved online. Website pages were developed to include photographs of all 171 women and videos was developed to ensure participants of the project and the general public could still view the exhibition.
3. Live (online) artist talk with Ponch Hawkes to discuss the meaning behind the photographs and the purpose of the photography exhibition in challenging gender equality.
4. Hard copy and digital exhibition catalogue created and disseminated. https://www.bayside.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/changing_faces_cat_1905_v4_final.pdf
5. Social media promotion of the project and awareness raising about Bayside's past and current democratic representation.
6. Delivery of an online workshop with Women's Health in the South East and Victorian Local Government Association to support women in running for Council in the October 2020 elections.
7. Delivery of an online celebration, networking and concluding event for participants. Katherine Fox key note speaker and 5 participants shared their leadership journeys.

Appendix I

Project Reach for City of Port Phillip – Gender Equality Game Jam

Activity	Applications / Registrations	Participants (Game Jammers)	Mentors / Presenters	Public	Additional comments
Recruitment of <i>GE Game Jam</i> participants	76	36	NA	NA	GGA
Recruitment of <i>GE Game Jam</i> mentors	25	NA	13	NA	Mentors included: 3 x Gender equality and 11 x technical
Delivery of customised GE Workshop	All participants required	27	5	NA	Plus 38 views of livestream (see Attachment 1)
Delivery of two-day <i>GE Game Jam</i>	49	36	13	NA	
Delivery of Play Party event	100	36	10	54	2 x speakers; 4 x mentors; 4 x GGA assistants.
Display and demonstration at PAX Australia gaming forum	NA	No data	NA	No data	
Provision of free, online access to <i>GE Game Jam</i> games and resources https://girlgeekacademy.com/gender-equality-game-jam/ https://itch.io/jam/gender-equality-jam-2019	NA	NA	NA	117	104+67+ Views of Flickr Gender Equality Game Jam Albums

Social media reach for project	Impressions/ Reach	Total engagements	Reactions	Print Media	Total
Twitter	92,357	2,790	0	GGA media attempts and coverage	1.1M
Facebook	6936	472	250		
LinkedIn	777	23	0		
Total	100,070	3,285	250		

Recruitment of GE Game Jam participants

Online registration process established for individuals and teams. Targeted invitations and general promotion distributed to potential Jammers. Key messaging emphasized the opportunity as inclusive, free and outlined theme of Gender Equality. Agreed assessment criteria (in priority order) for GGA Assessment Panel assuming more applicants than places: 1) Technical skills fit; 2) Gender mix (target demographics are 51% Female, 48% Male, 1% Other) and 3) Cultural fit/personality for the creating of a supportive environment: discard applicants who have a known/previous background in not working well under game jam conditions; 4) Connection to the City of Port Phillip: live, work or play. Registration process enquired about name, technical skills (i.e. hackers, hipsters, hustlers – programmers, designers, artists, writers, others) and requested basic demographic information. Where possible, participation barriers were reduced to ensure inclusion. Copyright and ownership arrangements were clarified. Aim was for all external facing materials to be forwarded to Queerly Represent Me for review and comment.

Recruitment of GE Game Jam mentors

Brief Role Description developed for Mentors. Three experienced Gender Equality mentors were nominated by Council and Star Health to support Jammers around GE content (Sally, Kelsey and Danny). Agreed assessment criteria (in priority order) for GGA assuming more technical mentor applicants than places: 1) Technical skills fit; 2) Availability to participate in workshop and provide support throughout the Game Jam; 3) Demographic mix; and 4) Connection to the City of Port Phillip: live, work or play. GGA reached out to their technical mentors listing, industry listing and made a public call to attract suitable mentors with technical expertise. Registration process required name, technical skills, qualifications/experience and basic demographic information. Mentors provided technical assistance throughout the game jam to ensure Jammers were able to produce a functional game by the end of the weekend. Mentors were offered an hourly payment rate and expected to participate in the Workshop, Game Jam and Game Jam Play Party.

Design and delivery of one customised Gender Equality Workshop to GE Game Jam participants at The Arcade

Workshop venue was The Arcade in South Melbourne. The in-person workshop was three hours in duration including two hours of content (6.30pm to 9pm, Wednesday 4 September, 2019). Star Health in partnership with Council provided expertise around primary prevention and the equal and respectful relationships program as well as project support capacity which ensured appropriate information, resources and training was provided to participants and project partners. GGA co-ordinated event and logistics (invitational support, selecting and securing presenters, venue booking, catering, attendance register). Customised workshop materials were developed by the presenters. Printed pre and post-workshop surveys were administered and the workshop was livestreamed for reference purposes and to support game jammers unable to attend. A slack channel was established for participants to share and access resources post-workshop. Participants completed photo/recording consent forms. Speakers: Jim Rimmer (Vic Health Mental Wellbeing and Arts), Christy Lang (Gender Equality) and The Arcade/GGA (Technical).

Delivery of a two-day GE Game Jam at The Arcade which involved participants and mentors

Game Jam venue was The Arcade in South Melbourne. The in-person event was held 9am to 9pm Saturday and 9am to 2pm Sunday (14 and 15 September 2019), and followed by the Game Jam Play Party from 3pm to 5pm. Tasks undertaken included: developing a documented Game Jam Delivery Plan; event co-ordination and logistics (marketing, invitational support, venue, catering, attendance register); participants completing photo/recording consent form (workshop non-attendees); administration of participant and audience surveys; photos, recordings and vox pops. Regular communications with Jammers and mentors using slack channel. Quality, nourishing food and refreshments provided. Venue set up as gender-neutral, inclusive and supportive. Mentors available throughout the day.

Appendix I continued

Design and delivery of Play Party event following the conclusion of the GE Game Jam involving participants, mentors, speakers and public audience

Venue was The Arcade in South Melbourne. In-person event duration was two hours (3pm to 5pm, Sunday 15 September, 2019). Eventbrite online registration process used. Tasks undertaken included: developing a documented Game Jam Play Party running sheet; event co-ordination and logistics (marketing, invitational support, venue, catering, attendance register); compiling a list of VIPs to be invited (VicHealth, Mayor, Council, Star Health, Minister for Innovation, gaming industry representatives); audience members completing photo/recording consent form; administration of participant and audience surveys; photos, recordings and vox pops. Opportunity to speak with games creators. Games created during Game Jam are to be made publicly accessible to play. Official welcome and acknowledgements, branded collateral to be displayed and celebratory cupcakes for all.

Physical display and demonstration of game/s at PAX Australia Gaming Forum held in Melbourne

A number of the games created during the game jam were exhibited at the PAX Australia Gaming Forum on 13 – 15 October 2019. Due to a number of operational constraints no reach data was captured during this process. The games were accessible in the free play area of the PAX Australia Gaming Forum.

Provision of free, online access to GE Game Jam games and resources.

The games created during the game jam have been made publicly accessible after the game jam for the broader community to play. Games uploaded to a platform for free play across the world/globally (itch.io), to minimise barriers to access. Games to be promoted via social networks itch.io, Twitch.tv and other games-focused channels. Encourage game creators to submit games to major games festivals including Freeplay Independent Games Festival, PAX (Global), Game Developer Conference. There was an intention to capture post-event and project media reach and circulation.

Appendix J

Project Reach for South Gippsland Shire – Girls Own Space

Activity	Live Audience Numbers	Workshop numbers	Social Media statistics	Website statistics	Newspaper articles
Workshops	Korumburra – 16 participants Leongatha – 18 participants Foster – 6 participants Mirboo North – 4 participants	7 x weekly workshops per site = 28 pre-COVID + 16 x workshops post-COVID lockdown = 44 TOTAL	Facebook posts (Council) 15	NA	6
Project partners	16		Facebook posts (partner posts) 20 estimated	NA	2

Participation in workshops varied greatly

The Korumburra project had the highest number of participants, which was amazing, considering that only 2 young women turned up for the first workshop. We communicated the call for participants via the local Community House and the Business Association, as the President was our project champion. We also spoke at several Secondary School assemblies and handed out information, none of which had any great success until the art teacher came on board. She quietly nudged a couple of key young women in our direction, and once they had experienced one of the workshops, word got out and the 16 participants came.

The **Foster** project was similar to this, in that it really took the active promotion of the project by the school's art department to build the numbers. Three young women came to the first workshop after we had visited the school and spoken to a small group of potentially interested, creative students. We gained very little response from promotions via the Foster Community House or via the various sporting clubs.

The **Mirboo North** project did not place emphasis on the number of participants, instead focusing on process and engagement with those who did turn up at their door. This project ran a structured and professional design development process throughout their workshops, which ultimately suited a smaller group. Commitment to this project was very personal, with two of the members revealing abuse stories (one of the women had just left a relationship this year on the grounds of violence). This afforded the 6 participating members (including the artists) in the group and high level of trust and belonging to the project, as well as pride. They 'owned' all aspects and stages of the project. This group communicated regularly (via WhatsApp) right though lockdown and reunited easily in the final stages.

The **Leongatha** project was very different in that we visited the Secondary School several times to let the students know about the project however no students turned up to any of the workshops. The difference in uptake from Foster and Korumburra, I think, can be explained in that both of these sites had the school's art teachers on board, while Leongatha and Mirboo North did not.

Appendix J continued

All Leongatha's participants came directly from Alisha's pre-existing relationship with the local disability providers. This was not a negative, it just created a very different dynamic for participants. All workshops took place in a school room, with support workers present, aside from two film sessions which took place on site. The logistics of this particular project had to be tailored to the specific needs of the cohort, all of which had varied needs.

Social media did not play a large role in the project as a whole, for several reasons;

1. That the most effective means of enlisting participants was clearly through personal connection and face to face communication – real, committed interest and uptake only happened when we visited the Schools and gained access to potentially interested students (those that had already been shoulder tapped by teachers).
2. Once the projects started up, the outward communication style of social media was irrelevant and inappropriate. The workshops were very much about internal process and the development of relationships and trust. Social media posts would have potentially disrupted this process.
3. The projects have only just been physically completed – these achievements have been posted in celebration of what was made, not so much what was developed in terms of personal learnings and relationships.

The Girls Own Space project was extraordinary in its attraction of **project partners**;

The partner relationship was particularly strong with the **Mirboo North** Community Foundation (MNCF). This is evident in their offer to use the Foundation's courtyard as a 'canvas' for design – with very few caveats and design controls or edits from the board. The reach that this physical space affords the project is extensive, as it is very public and central to the town. The MNCF have great connection across the community, and the ongoing potential for this project to communicate the broader goals of the project is very real.

The **Foster** project is another great example of community partners volunteering support. This is evidenced in the handing over of an entire shed by the Recreation Reserve Committee, again with no caveats or controls over the design content of the proposed mural. An interesting factor in this project is that this town has an unusual number of students identifying as same sex attracted and gender non-specific. Foster has, as a community, been forced into discussion (not always acceptance) around non-traditional gender roles. Discussions with partner representatives almost always involved the retelling of these stories and how people were viewing the uneasy shift into 'modern times'.

The netball and football clubs had their fair share of these stories, particularly the once dying football club who were having to admit that their recent revival was directly related to a thriving women's team.

The Foster project was made possible through the generous donation of space – for artworks, storage of materials, and warm, dry spaces for group workshops.

The **Korumburra** project was another standout in terms of partnerships as the Men's Shed handed a key over to the facilitating artists and invited them to not only use their tea rooms for weekly meetings – which overflowed with the 16 young women cutting and gluing paper assemblages out onto the verandah! – but to store their paints and materials in a place where space was at a premium. Inspiring conversations were had with the men, drawing parallels between our two projects, around the value of making as a group in terms of community connection, mental health and as antidote to loneliness. This project was supported by the Business Association as well as the Community House, representatives from both of these appearing regularly at workshops as well as fielding questions around what was happening and why.

Often the negative questions (like those found in social media posts) were answered and rebutted by these partners and project champions, which was always amazing.

Appendix J continued

Leongatha was a very interesting project in terms of partnership, as these were old connections (via Alisha's work) that fast tracked many of the formal processes of collaboration through trust. The directors of both Yooralla and the Specialist School know Alisha well, and had worked with her on a number of previous projects, so many of the usual questions were not asked and the standard governance and oversight procedures were not put in place. Initially, this made for the easy construction of a workshop schedule and provision of workshop space. This partnership was tested however when the resulting artwork (a short film) was deemed unacceptable for viewing. This triggered a number of long conversations with myself and the director of Yooralla, bringing a range of positives; a great learning opportunity for me, as an Arts Worker, as well as new relationships with an organisation that I hope to work with into the future. The artist and the filmmaker were philosophical around the loss of their project. Both Yooralla and the Specialist school have made it clear that it is important to the participants to experience an outcome from this project and are happy for Drift Media to incorporate samples of footage into the documentary for viewing.

In the process of unpacking how this had happened, the following realisations were made;

1. That the artist had undertaken a thorough creative process in terms of her project, and in terms of the proposed project (which involved an installation of screen vignettes with footage of the young women in the context of the Little Red Riding Hood story)
2. Because of COVID, the artist and the filmmaker had decided to translate the vignette footage into a short film – participants were not able to be part of this process – the outcome of which was markedly different from the original proposal
3. That without the ongoing participation and involvement of the support workers, content was developed that was seen to 'disempower' the young women involved
4. That the content of this project was very ambitious and complex in terms of gender politics and may not have been appropriate for the participants
5. That the project was developed overall in too short a time frame – that this cohort really need time to allow for proper understanding of what is taking place and what their role is in the project
6. That any future projects with this cohort need will much greater input/collaboration from any support organisations

Appendix K

Project Reach for Knox City – Framed By Gender

The project Reach Statistics were obtained from known sources of engagement, operated by Knox City Council. This includes 2 Facebook pages (one for Knox arts and culture and one general for Knox City Council), as well as the Knox City Council website.

Activity	Live Audience Numbers	Social Media statistics	Website statistics	Newspaper articles
1a. I am Woman Hear Me Mall	80	Facebook – 632 Facebook (Image) reach – 5183 Facebook Event – 2900 Total = 8715	N/A	0
1b. Feminism for kids with the Hotham Street Ladies	N/A	Facebook – 267 Facebook Event – 28,000 Total = 28,267	N/A	Not recorded
1c. Scavenger Hunt – A Mall of One’s Own	N/A	Facebook – 433 Total = 433	N/A	Not recorded
1d. Femme Frost Off	N/A	Facebook – 473 Facebook – 734 Facebook Event – 16,000 Total = 17,207	N/A	Not recorded
2a. Men’s Behaviour Change Groups	N/A	N/A	N/A	0
2b. Scoresby/Boronia K-12 College		N/A	N/A	35 30
2c. Storytelling Boronia Library		Not found	N/A	3
3. Words For Change		Facebook – 693 Facebook – 883 Facebook Event – 18,000 Facebook Event – 21,000 Total = 40,576	N/A	40 Sewing Circle 4
4. Shop of Opportunity	N/A	Facebook – 3250	N/A	Mall participants not counted
5. FBG – general	* Facebook 419 (Intro Anna Farago) * Announcing FBG 810 Total= 1229	2099	5. FBG – general	
	Total Audience: 80	Social Media Total: 99,677	Website Total: 2099	Participants: 108

Appendix K continued

To ensure maximum reach a promotional campaign, including all partners consisted of extensive social media linking back to a dedicated website, websites and a project/exhibition catalogue. Information on events were put onto a dedicated Knox City Council Arts and Culture FB event page, Council's general FB site and the Knox City Council official website. Other hosting sites included social media platforms belonging to the artists themselves. A communications plan was developed by Knox City Councils Communications team to deliver these messages and events within strategic time intervals. The above table indicates the known views of each post across the FBG project

Both artists are well respected and brought their own media following and art audience which will stretch the reach of Framed by Gender. They used their own promotional platforms to maximise participation and impact.

To extend the project further, in March 2020 a curated selection of six photographs informed an exhibition of photographic skins, installed for twelve months in the Boronia Light boxes.

Following the projects initial installation in Boronia Mall the projects installation items were displayed at Boronia Library. The same selection of curated photographs informed the photographic catalogue, which accompanied the exhibition.

Knox City Council has extensive networks and established relationships with various CALD, disability and seniors groups and agencies, which were all promoted to. Individuals who have used these services or agencies, who may not be part of a group but receive promotional material from them were encouraged to attend a general community workshop or activity. Through designing inclusive, interesting and varied workshops and activities that appealed to diverse ages and cultures and presenting them in a positive non-threatening manner, we hoped to reach and engage isolated individuals via our established interdepartmental and external partner networks and promotional campaign.

Engagement opportunities created for Framed by Gender included:

- 'The Shop of Opportunity' installation

Hotham Street Ladies activations:

- Opening- Facilitated karaoke: Songs about women and gender, amplifying women's voices
- Feminism for Kids: Families discuss gender issues via food
- Scavenger Hunt: HSL will create a map exploring gender themes in public spaces
- Femme Frost Off – 'Frosting' event, street art style, and identifying/transforming gendered spaces

'Words for Changes' screen printing workshops:

- In centre space of Boronia Mall with general public: 1 workshop
- Craft groups: 1 workshop in Boronia Library and 2-3 women visited Anna' Farago's studio 4 times to continue the work
- Storytelling workshop at Boronia Library: 1 workshop
- Men's Behaviour Change: observed 2 groups for 2 weeks then worked with a select group of men who volunteered
- Schools: Years 5-9
- Boronia K-12 College: 2 workshops (each workshop 5 hours duration),
- Scoresby Secondary College: 1 workshop (approximately 5 hours duration)

Project engagement extension (potentially thousands):

- Boronia Library exhibition installation
- Two creative/documentary short films/photographic series shared on partner digital platforms
- Boronia Light box exhibition
- Dedicated project website/blog/social media
- Partner websites/social media hosting project content
- Curated touring exhibition
- Exhibition catalogue and exhibition and project promotional collateral throughout Boronia

Appendix L

Project Reach for Yarra Ranges – Balit Bagurrk

Activity	Live Audience Numbers	Social Media statistics	Website statistics
Workshop one	25	Facebook – 101 Twitter – 85	500
Workshop two	17	Facebook – 80 Twitter – 75	600

The project implementation plan included workshops to be conducted throughout the year for skills development and knowledge sharing, run by community artists and/or writers. The intention of these workshops was to engage the Community in and around the Yarra Ranges to participate, and contribute a story/dedication about a relative or friend that is a strong Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Women from the Yarra Ranges region. As means to gather Community, we looked at various types of workshops that we could run to capture stories about women, that the Community would want to attend. We engaged with our creative partnership contacts that assisted us with ideas on what workshops to offer, shared their professional contacts with us. The idea then came about to run an Earring Making workshop run by The Koorie Circle – an Aboriginal business, that are quite well know in the Aboriginal community and have quite a following on social media – Facebook 5k followers, Instagram 12.2k followers. The Koorie Circle, in partnership with Yarra Ranges Council facilitated 2 earring making workshops. We then developed a Marketing Campaign that outlined our planned promotional activities (please see the Marketing Campaign attached).

To ensure greater engagement and attendance to these workshops Yarra Ranges Council created a Facebook post which received 101 views/likes (see social media post attached).

The Koorie Circle also shared the post on their social media platforms – Facebook & Instagram (which we do not have stats for).

Our Marketing Campaign included engagement activities that involved seeking the support of local & non-local community orgs, community

members, Council members, friends and family and the workshop facilitator to share the event details via their social media platforms, displaying and giving out promotional materials (flyers, posters – see attached). Unfortunately we are unable to track the statistic on these activities.

We ran the initial workshop at one of Councils facilities in Healesville – The Memo. There was an overwhelming response to all of the promotional activity (as mentioned above) and filled the workshop with 25 participants.

Some mentionable activities included;

1. Women Sharing stories
2. Fun Designing earrings
3. Happy & culturally safe environment (for Indigenous & non-Indigenous participants)
4. Photography of community engaging and evidence of earring dedications (submission content)

Then through word of mouth from first workshop, we received requests to host a second workshop for the Yarra Ranges community. As the first workshop was such a success.

The second workshop was not only a very important community engagement initiative, but it also produced even more amazing community submissions for the Balit Bagurrk publication. We had a total of 17 participants for that workshop.

In total for both workshops, We had over 40 participants, who gave amazing feedback towards this brilliant project, and gave those who participated a great sense of pride in what they have not only produced but also been apart of.

Appendix M

Project Reach for City of Yarra – The Empathy Project

Activity	Live Audience Numbers	Social Media statistics	Website statistics
Workshop one	25	Facebook – 101 Twitter – 85	500
Workshop two	80	Facebook – 80 Twitter – 75	600

Appendix N

Local Council Interview Schedule

Domain: Project Impact

Question No.	Question
1.	Reflecting on the original aims of the project, your experiences and the data you collected throughout the project, what are the key impacts achieved from the project? Were the original aims of the project achieved?
2.	What stands out as the most important impact for your participants and/or audiences?
3.	Do you believe your capacity and confidence has increased to use Arts based programs for gender equality initiatives in the future?
4.	How was the project received by the local/target community? Prompt: And the wider community?
5.	In what ways are you/will you and/or Council continue to promote or extend the messages of the art initiatives beyond the initial funding and project timelines? Prompt: Has work on this started? What plans are in development or in place to achieve this?
6.	Are there any ongoing partnerships or planned projects with the artist/art group focused on gender equality work as a result of this project?
7.	Were any Council practices or policies developed or altered as a result of this project? Please describe.
8.	Were there other benefits, anticipated or unanticipated, of the project? Prompt: Shared learning? More awareness of gender inequality within the organisation? Increased support for future arts-based initiatives?
9.	Were there any negative consequences of the project? Prompt: Decreased support from Council for future gender equality projects?
10.	Was there any backlash? Can you describe what happened? Prompt: How was this handled?

Appendix N continued

Domain: Factors associated with the development of an effective partnership to meet the project goals of Gender Equality in the arts

Question No.	Question
11.	<p>How well was your role (or your department's role) in the project supported by the broader organization?</p> <p>Prompt:</p> <p>What other Council departments and resources were most important in providing support?</p> <p>Has the involvement of other departments influenced their understanding of or commitment to gender equality promotion?</p>
12.	<p>What were the benefits of working in partnership with the artist/ art group?</p> <p>Prompt:</p> <p>What did each partner bring that the other could not? (i.e. unique contribution).</p>
13.	<p>What have been the challenges of the partnership between the local council and the artist/art group?</p>
14.	<p>How did you support communication between your department and the artist/art group?</p>
15.	<p>From your experience, what do you think are the key factors for creating and maintaining a successful partnership between the Council and artist/art group?</p> <p>Additional prompts to support exploration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership resource sharing? • Partnership governance? • Partnership process in handling difference of opinions • Partnership processes for handling difficult situations such as pushback and resistance; who/how in the partnership handles. (interviewee may already have covered this at Q10)
16.	<p>What suggestions do you have for strengthening or sustaining the partnership?</p> <p>Prompt: In future partnership projects, what would you do differently?</p>

Appendix O

Artist/Art Group Interview Schedule

Consent:

Before we start, I need to check that you received the information to participants document. Did you have any questions? Do you consent to being interviewed and to the interview being recorded?

Background question:

Can you briefly describe the project and your role in it?

Domain: Project Impact

Question No.	Question
1.	<p>What was the gender equality message conveyed within the project?</p> <p>Prompt:</p> <p>Which key driver(s) did it address?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Challenging gender stereotypes and roles; • Strengthening positive, equal and respectful relationships; • Promoting women's independence and decision making; and • Challenging the condoning of violence against women. <p>How effective do you think this message has been?</p> <p>What factors contributed to the success of the art initiative?</p> <p>Were there any other goals of the project?</p>
2.	<p>Can you describe the feedback (if any) you have received about your/the art in this project?</p> <p>Prompt (depending on project):</p> <p>What was the audience reaction?</p>
3.	<p>Did you experience pushback or negative reactions to the project?</p> <p>Prompt:</p> <p>If yes, where did it come from (e.g. within council, the art organisation, the community)</p> <p>If yes, how did this impact you and your work?</p> <p>How was it handled by the partnership?</p>

Appendix O continued

Domain: Project Impact

Question No.	Question
4.	<p>Given the nature of this project, do you see yourself as an Artist (i.e. Artist for Social Change) and if so would you continue to undertake gender equality projects?</p> <p>Prompt:</p> <p>Have you done this type of work before?</p> <p>How has this project extended your earlier work?</p> <p>Is the Arts an effective medium for promoting gender equality messages?</p> <p>How has working in collaboration with council influenced the gender equality message or outcome?</p>
5.	<p>Have you (or will you) continue to promote or extend the messages of this gender equality art initiative beyond the initial funding and project timelines?</p>
6.	<p>Would you work in partnerships with the local council on future gender equality projects) as a result of this project?</p> <p>Prompt:</p> <p>And other social/health related projects?</p>
7.	<p>Did you work with project participants for any length of time? (If yes, continue). What do you see as the main impact the project had on the participants?</p> <p>Prompt:</p> <p>What was achieved during the time you worked with them?</p> <p>What did they get out of participating?</p> <p>Was there anything that really surprised you about the group?</p>
8.	<p>What advice would you give other artists who want to use their Art for gender equality?</p>

Domain: Factors associated with effective partnership development

Question No.	Question
9.	<p>What have been the benefits of working in partnership with the local council?</p> <p>Prompt: What did each partner bring to the partnership that the other could not?</p>
10.	<p>From your perspective, what have been the challenges in implementing the art project?</p> <p>Prompt:</p> <p>Have there been challenges in working with your local council partner? With another department within Council?</p>
11.	<p>From your experience, what do you think are the key factors for creating and maintaining a successful partnership between local council and the art/artist organization for this type of work? (Note this may need to be reworded for those Councils where the arts initiative was in partnership with their own arts department)</p> <p>Additional prompts to support exploration:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Partnership resource sharing?• Partnership governance?• Partnership process in handling difference of opinions• Partnership processes for handling difficult situations• What suggestions do you have for strengthening or sustaining the partnership?
12.	<p>How did you support communication between you/your arts organisation/dept. and the local council/dept.</p>



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