

just  
add  
water



## **Attachment B: Overview of the Evaluation Process**

# Attachment B

## Overview of the Evaluation Process

### Evaluation Design in Context

Analysis of the Alexandrina context and lessons from the first two RCCs informed the design of the evaluation.

#### Program content

The RCC model represents a complex program of activity:

- involving community members from diverse backgrounds and age groups
- exploring creative potential individually or in groups
- working with diverse art forms and media
- in traditional and alternative venues from open air to intimate indoor spaces
- fostering collaborations among local groups, artists, arts organisations from within and outside of the region
- ranging from small and medium sized projects to large cultural events
- variable in duration and intensity – from one-off interactions to sustained involvement over several months.

Community members have opportunities to experience and/or contribute to creating exhibitions, live performances, installations, public events, workshops, residencies, forums, showcases, storytelling, films and more. Some become involved in many over the year while others are more selective. The official program, however, although comprehensive and broad, is only the starting point. Ideally it inspires spontaneous eruptions of arts and culture in new and surprising ways.

#### Implications for evaluation design:

- The evolving and unpredictable form of the RCC requires a flexible, multi-dimensional design to capture the many ways in which people engage with the program at different stages and from varied entry points.

### Evaluation focus

The RCC program aims to bring about positive changes at the level of communities and regions. Structurally this is achieved through many different initiatives, each with its own objectives and creative integrity. A high level of satisfaction of aims for any individual initiative, however, may not translate directly to overall success of the program. Change at the broad level is thought to result from the interaction of many different factors, based on more than the sum of the constituent parts. Nevertheless, for many participants the principle point of contact may be with just one or two initiatives. This complex picture necessitates the collection of data at a number of levels to ascertain where and how changes are occurring.

#### Implications for evaluation design:

- The primary focus of data collection, analysis and reporting is at the program level - that is, on 'Just Add Water' as an overall undertaking. For practical purposes data is collected at both the community level, seeking feedback about the overall program, as well as at the level of individual initiatives or elements of the program where people engage, in order to build a composite picture.

#### Program stakeholders

Different stakeholders in the program potentially represent different kinds of interests in terms of evaluation findings, for example:

**State** government departments and Country Arts SA will be interested in information to ensure accountability and to inform the development of future programs.

**Regional** partner organisations and staff will be interested in feedback about how the elements of the program were received, the benefits for arts development and community wellbeing, as well as learning about the effectiveness of the strategies employed; this information will enable the region to

continue to develop and build on the successes of the year.

**Local** artists, arts organisations, groups and community members will be interested in opportunities to receive feedback about their initiatives, voice their views about their own experiences, reflect on the highs and lows, identify what they have learnt and what they would like to achieve in the future.

**National** stakeholders are also highlighted in the Alexandrina context as a result of three additional initiatives focusing on the region during 2012 and in subsequent years, as outlined in the Background to this Report:

The biennial Regional Arts Australia national conference was held in Goolwa in October 2012, with selected projects/events in the conference program funded through the J.A.W. budget and hosted collaboratively. The evaluation therefore includes feedback on certain elements in the conference program and the mutual impact of the two programs is discussed.

The Australia Council for the Arts has selected the Alexandrina region as one of two pilot programs funded as part of the national Cultural Places initiative. This program involves collaboration with state (Country Arts SA and Arts SA) and local (Alexandrina Council) arts and non-arts agencies to extend the regional centre of culture methodology initiated during the 2012 J.A.W. program for a further 2 years.

The Australia Council for the Arts has also provided funding through the Creative Communities Partnerships Initiative 'Change and Adaptation' (C&A). C&A is an arts-based collaboration with state health and environment sector agencies across the Fleurieu region within which Alexandrina is located. Although there is no direct overlap with the J.A.W. program, Country Arts SA and the Alexandrina Council are both partners to this initiative and locally based artists have been working across the spectrum of projects, so naturally there is some cross-fertilisation.

#### Implications for evaluation design:

- The evaluation aims to generate a range of information relevant to a range of audiences within the scope of resource and time constraints. This means:
- Data collection and analysis takes account of the multiple arts-based initiatives hosted within the region during 2012 and the potential for overlap.
- The Report was commissioned by Country Arts SA which, together with Alexandrina Council and the Australia Council for the Arts, represents the primary target audience.

### Types of evaluation research questions

Typically program evaluation examines three types of evaluation questions:

- Products or output questions: ie what kinds of results are being achieved?
- Impact or outcome questions: ie how successful it has been in meeting goals and objectives in the short/medium term?
- Process questions ie how well it is being implemented?

Although each type is relevant to the RCC context, project or program evaluations of this kind have very limited scope to address questions of impact or outcome beyond the immediate and short term for obvious reasons. This would require a longer term investment in follow-up research.

#### Implications for evaluation design:

Reflecting the relevance of different types of evaluation, the evaluation of 'Just Add Water' involved collecting data about four broad questions:

- What kinds of arts and cultural initiatives were provided?
- How did people respond to these opportunities and experiences?
- What difference did the program make (to individuals/groups/organisations/the whole community)?

## Data collection

The evaluation plan for J.A.W. sought to provide opportunities for a wide range of people to offer feedback about their experiences, including members of the wider community who may not have participated directly. As in 'Ripples Murray Bridge', the need for a flexible approach to capture the different perspectives and evolving nature of the program was recognised. The resulting plan was based on the latter with minor adjustments in response to identified strengths and weaknesses in the previous evaluation and different emphases in the program content. Table # gives an overview of data collection methods and timing, with details below:

Timing	Evaluation components	Information sought
Before Event (end 2011)	'Pre'-Survey (by telephone) of residents	Baseline data across local population re perceptions, participation, attendance, attitudes and sources of information.
	'Pre'-Audit of key community groups and organisations	Baseline data to gauge range of activities, levels of participation, facilities used and to introduce the evaluation process.
During Event (2012)	Documentation of activities and participation in all projects/workshops	Basic information about numbers of sessions, attendances & levels of participation by age and gender etc to record reach and range of program.
	Survey of participants in key projects/workshops	Feedback from participants about the process and impact of involvement in projects; questions re enjoyment, satisfaction, learning (knowledge and skills), social (networks and support) and health/wellbeing.
	More detailed information from selected 'case studies'	Additional documentation and interviews/surveys with project coordinators and artists in a smaller number of representative projects.
	Survey of gallery visitors	Feedback from visitors to South Coast Art Centre and Signal Point Gallery.
	Survey of lead artists in key projects	Feedback re creative development, observed impact, process.
	Informal feedback	A range of opportunities for members of public to offer feedback through the Council website 'MySay' portal, flyers on seats at performances, entries in 'comments' books at events and projects.
After Event (end 2012)	'Post'-Survey of residents*	Follow-up survey of residents to gauge changes in community level perceptions, participation, attendance, attitudes and sources of information as well as involvement in the RCC year.
	'Post'-Survey community groups and organisations	Feedback to gauge changes in number, range of activities, levels of participation, facilities used and future expectations as a result of the RCC year. Comparison with 'pre' audit.
	Survey of participating schools	Feedback from key teachers about the overall experience on behalf of students and teachers.
	Focus groups with community reference group members, volunteers etc	Feedback on process and value of involvement in the RCC planning and implementation.
	Focus group with members of Council staff	Reflections on process and learning.
Interviews with community leaders in arts and culture	Reflections on process and learning.	

Table #1: Data Collection overview

### Pre-Post Community Surveys

A 'pre' (December 2011) and 'post' (December 2012) survey of residents was undertaken independently by Harrison Research using a similar tool to the one administered in Ripples Murray Bridge to track changes across the community in order to appraise the reach and impact of the program. From a representative sample, 'CATI' surveys were conducted with 400 residents (telephone calls identified the person aged 15 years

Clockwise from top right: Watersong lanterns made by community with Bob Daly and Kalyna Micenko/State Opera SA and Adelaide Art Orchestra at Watersong/ Mayor Kym McHugh (speaking) with Country Arts SA CEO Steve Saffell at Launch of Just Add Water, November 2011



and over in their household to most recently have had their birthday). Questions were developed in consultation with Country Arts SA Program Manager and the Independent Evaluation Consultant and covering: participation rates in various types of cultural and arts related activities and events; awareness and knowledge of the J.A.W. program; attitudes towards the region and its people; and, drivers and barriers to greater participation in arts and cultural opportunities. Findings from this survey are not reported here for reasons which are discussed in 'Limitations' below.

### Evaluation of Program elements

A series of tools was designed to capture the direct experience of participants, audiences, project teams, volunteers and organizers throughout the year. The approach was similar to Ripples in 2010, but was refined on the basis of targeting sources of feedback and information that were most likely to generate rich data. A generic tool was developed for each category of feedback (with a few exceptions where existing groups chose to implement their standard tools or in the case of the Wooden Boats Exchange where the tool included supplementary questions reflecting a different level of collaboration). The tools and their application are summarised below.

#### T1: Community group (a) and schools (b) survey

At the start of 2012 surveys were administered to selected community groups which had indicated their interest in becoming involved in Just Add Water. These were delivered by hand or email by the Project Officer and returned by email or post to the Independent Consultant. These 'pre-surveys' gathered information about current and proposed participation in arts and cultural activities. At the end of 2012 'post-surveys' were administered again to gauge changes in the groups' levels of participation and satisfaction with their involvement. (Not all of the groups continued to be involved while a small number of new groups emerged during the year hence the list of responding groups 'post' program is not entirely consistent with the 'pre' group.)

At the end of 2012 a survey of key contact teachers in participating local schools was conducted using 'Survey Monkey', an on-line tool. Respondents were asked to provide feedback on student responses and their views on the value of the experience for the whole school community.

#### T2: Feedback survey of participants in selected participatory or 'hands-on' initiatives

A series of initiatives were selected to provide feedback about sustained creative experiences – based on either intensive participation (eg in a two-day workshop) or over a longer period with intermittent contact (eg weekly rehearsals culminating in a short season of performances). In such cases relatively detailed surveys about their experience were administered to appropriate participants at the point of, or shortly after, the conclusion of the period of involvement. Surveys were administered by project coordinators and data were collected and collated progressively with assistance from Country Arts SA project officers.

#### T3: Gallery visitors' feedback survey

Feedback was sought from visitors to the continuous program of exhibitions held in the two main galleries in Goolwa. These galleries were staffed by a team of volunteers who encouraged visitors to self-complete brief hand-written surveys after viewing the exhibitions. Data were collected and collated progressively with assistance from Country Arts SA project officers.

#### T4: Lead artists & Project Coordinators feedback survey

A survey of lead artists and project coordinators in a representative range of initiatives was administered by email and returned by email or post to the Independent Consultant. Topics covered included feedback about their own experiences as artists and coordinators, observations about participant responses and the extent to which the projects contributed to the program objectives.



### T5: Focus Group schedules for Community Reference Group (a) and Council Staff (b)

Members of the Community Reference Group, community leaders and volunteer representatives were invited to participate in one of two scheduled focus groups held at the Alexandrina Council Chambers or Centenary Hall meeting room. Key community leaders unable to attend were invited to attend follow up interviews based on the same schedule of questions.

Staff members of the Alexandrina Council, most of who had been involved in delivering the RCC program, were invited to participate in a focus group held at the Council offices.

Both focus group schedules covered themes related to the program objectives.

#### Documentation

Country Arts SA staff supervised the recording of basic attendance data for each category of project throughout the program. In addition a file of media reports focusing on J.A.W. was analysed to identify comments from community members. Together with the Incidental data described below these were referred to as supplementary data in Part 2 of this Report.

#### Incidental data collection

Less structured feedback was gathered opportunistically including:

- Feedback from community members attending the four 'Conversation Cafés' organised by the project officer, in particular the final gathering focusing on evaluation of 2012; comments from group discussions were recorded by nominated scribes on butcher's paper then collected and transcribed.
- On-line postings to the Council's 'MySay' portal commenting about particular events and venues.
- 'Comments book' for 'The Sponge' family program conducted during each school vacation in which child and adult participants recorded their feedback by hand.
- Spontaneous testimonials emailed to organisers by community members and artists who had participated in the program.
- Feedback from participants in the 'Kumuwuki' Big Wave (Regional Arts Australia) national conference held in Goolwa in October 2012.
- Written reports from project coordinators in addition to completion of formal tools.

## Data analysis

### Quantitative data

1. The feedback surveys undertaken using the tools listed above generated relatively small numbers of responses for many projects and did not warrant use of computer assisted analysis software. The data were totalled by project and then again by feedback category and recorded in table form.

2. Data recording the number of events and attendances were entered and collated using Microsoft Excel spread sheets.

3. Schools surveys were completed and analysed using Survey Monkey software and Microsoft Excel spread sheets.

### Qualitative data

Surveys: Qualitative questions embedded in the feedback surveys were coded using a simple content analysis framework to group the comments and typical examples were selected to illustrate the range of responses in each group.

Focus Groups and Interviews: Focus groups and group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcripts were coded using a 'content framework' based on the 'a priori' topics that guided the design of the interview schedule. A 'thematic framework' was also used to capture the more complex emergent themes. A number of individual interviews were also recorded and analysed in the same way where appropriate; others were documented by hand-written notes as a record of key points.

Unstructured data: Incidental, unsolicited and unstructured data was analysed by identifying emerging themes and reported accordingly.

### Limitations

Given the very broad range of activities over the year and the constraints of resources and personnel, data collection relied heavily on the cooperation and skills of volunteers and project staff on site. As a result response patterns for the standard tools were sporadic, in particular in relation to the galleries where a very limited number of completed surveys suitable for analysis were retrieved.

The 'MySay' portal on the Alexandrina Council website was identified as a means of eliciting broad feedback from members of the public. Flyers were distributed at events and performances in Centenary Hall and other sites inviting people to post comments, however there

were very few responses received. It is possible that this method might be more effective in the future if and when the community becomes used to using MySay as a means of giving general feedback to Council, but in this case it was not successful.

Face-to-face methods including supervised self-complete surveys remain the most effective means of gaining individual feedback while qualitative interviews and focus groups are most reliable sources of rich data for an understanding of the dynamic effects at the community level.

Regarding the CATI survey of residents conducted by Harrison Research mentioned above, this method had provided reasonably useful information in relation to Ripples Murray Bridge and was employed in 2012 in the absence of other more feasible ways to gauge changes at the community level.

The findings are not reported here, however, because its ability to adequately capture the effects of J.A.W. 2012 was compromised by a number of factors. Firstly, as explained in Part 1, J.A.W. 2012 focused mainly on Goolwa as its hub, whereas the survey sample included the entire Alexandrina Council region.

The reasons for this decision were in order to establish baseline data not only for the 2012 program, but also for the subsequent extension of J.A.W. (Cultural Places) in 2013-2015 which reaches into other parts of the Council area, as well as Change and Adaptation which relates to the whole southern Fleurieu.

This means that the findings do not fairly reflect the experiences of the population most accessible to the hub of J.A.W. in 2012.

Secondly, the impact of shifts in telephone usage from land-line to mobile was underestimated. CATI relies on access to land-line services which tends to skew the pool of potential survey respondents to the older, longer term residents rather than those who are younger and more mobile.

Although the sample was controlled for age and postcode and the findings weighted, this nevertheless means that a significant proportion of people in certain groups were excluded from the sample while the responses of others were exaggerated.

These issues will be addressed and reported on in relation to the continuing J.A.W. (Cultural Places) and Change and Adaptation programs.

