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NEW ART AND MENTAL HEALTH GUIDELINES LAUNCHED

Country Arts SA has launched a new Arts and Mental Health resource ***Bringing it all together: Guidelines for Arts and Mental Health Projects*** ahead of Mental Health Week October 5-12.

The guidelines were produced in response to an identified need for art and mental health resources in South Australia.

Country Arts SA Director of Community Engagement Anthony Peluso said there was a nationwide request for guidelines.

“In conversations with other national bodies working in this field, I know many are waiting for the guidelines to be released to see how they can integrate elements of them into their programs,” Mr Peluso said.

Country Arts SA Arts and Mental Health Development Officer Simone Gillam developed the guidelines with an extensive state-wide network of Arts and Mental Health professionals across a two-year period.

“The main philosophy behind the guidelines is to foster mutual respect between artists, mental health workers and participants. These guidelines can be used in all art fields: visual arts, dance, music, performance, digital media, literature, sculpture, textiles and more,” Ms Gillam said.

“From being in this role over the last six years, I have noticed the need for guidelines in this area of arts and mental health in a community context. The guidelines are addressing a desire from stakeholders to be working on the same page when planning and working in this specialised area. All participants are genuinely hungry for support resources to assist with project development and best practice guidelines.”

A long standing partnership between Country Health SA and Country Arts SA has enabled the guidelines to be developed to better equip artists and mental health workers in this specific field.

Last week (September 22-26) Country Arts SA, supported by an Arts SA grant, held the last of its Arts and Mental Health Bringing It All Together 2014 workshops in Modbury and Port Noarlunga in which the guidelines were launched. During July, workshops were also held in Berri, Whyalla and Mount Gambier.

Workshop facilitator and community artist Helen Crawford has worked on many SA community arts projects and art and health projects across the last 10 years.

“The guidelines provide a really important check list to help projects succeed and avert problems,” she said.

“They also relate to everyone involved in a project from participants to organisers and supporters. In this way they help groups of people have important conversations that develop common understandings.”

Country Health SA Executive Director of Mental Health Rebecca Graham said mental health week was important in helping to reduce the stigma associated with mental health.

“With over 40% of people experiencing some form of mental illness in their lifetime, it is an issue that has the potential to affect anyone at any time.

“Mental health week this year encourages us all to think about our own wellbeing, and planned community events will help to inform and educate the local community on the impact of mental illness.

“Country Health SA is pleased to partner with Country Arts SA to provide guidance for artists and arts workers in working with mental health consumers.”

Country Arts SA will continue to support the arts and mental health sectors to generate better outcomes for their communities.

The Bringing It All Together Guidelines for Arts and Mental Health projects can be found here: <http://www.countryarts.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2014/07/BringingItAllTogether.pdf>

Media enquiries: Helene Sobolewski helene.sobolewski@countryarts.org.au or (08) 8444 0417 / 0423 828 035