

just add water

the case for an intensive arts stimulus
in regional communities

just add water fast facts

- Strong evidence of **increased capacity** within the community to deliver high quality arts projects
- Strong evidence that increased exposure **inspires confidence**
- Strong evidence of **motivation to maintain momentum**
- Strong evidence that **the community is better prepared** to develop strategies and overcome setbacks
- Strong evidence that a **three year timeframe is critical** for sustainability
- Alexandrina Council region: **Population 25,000**
- **128,354 total participation** over 3 years
- **1333 activities, events and projects**
- 827 free events and activities
- **creative participation** options in 47% of events and activities
- 2129 days **employment for professional artists**
- 843 days employment for Alexandrina's professional artists
- 407 days of **mentorship for local emerging artists**
- 35% of participating professional artists reside locally
- **72 new works created** across artform
- **91% Just Add Water brand recognition**
- Programming investment: \$3.7 million
- Capital refurbishment investment: \$2.7 million

Just Add Water, Alexandrina 2012 – 2014 makes a strong case for intensive arts stimulus programs in regional communities.

Just Add Water has shown how a regional community can re-imagine itself through an arts-led stimulus, proving that one of the greatest enablers of regional development is innovation and creativity.

During the three years of intense activity, through a tripartite funding arrangement between local, state and federal governments, this small community of 25,000 has accumulated participation of over 128,000 in well over 1300 different arts activities, projects and events.



Just Add Water (2012-2014) was a partnership between Alexandrina Council, Country Arts SA, Arts SA and the Australia Council, presented initially through the State Government's Regional Centre of Culture in 2012 and subsequently through the Australia Council's Cultural Places. *Just Add Water* has been project managed by Country Arts SA throughout.

The evaluation report by Dr. Christine Putland contains evidence which articulates the effect on individuals and how those individuals see the future of arts in their community.

"The most compelling finding radiating from the data was a strong motivation to continue the progress made since 2012, evident in the abundance of positive suggestions to Council about future development and also in expressions of personal resolve to contribute". Dr Christine Putland, Evaluation Consultant

Just Add Water demonstrated the impact of an intensive amount of cross-artform activity, which responded to the specific needs and aspirations of this small regional community, reaching a 'critical mass' which

resulted in significant change in community attitudes and led to operational change within the local government agency.

The Alexandrina community has passed the point of no return and 'going back' isn't an option. The voice for change is more articulate and there is a strong sense that the community can no longer live without arts as a fundamental part of daily life.

Just Add Water has invested in skills, local creative talent and existing assets, providing an environment where everyone is encouraged to nourish their own creativity, find their own strengths and celebrate the place they live.

The report demonstrates that a large number of diverse options, presented over a sustained period, enables people to take risks they might not otherwise take and in the process come to enjoy, understand and further their interest in new things. They also come to appreciate the diverse skills of others, especially those in their own community.

It shows that relevant, high quality artwork, whether imported or produced locally, coupled with active

participation, encourages ideas, unearths local talent, transforms individuals, builds audiences and opens up previously unimagined possibilities.

Council staff described a growing maturity in their ability and confidence to collaborate across disciplines and understanding the power of arts approaches in engaging the community to produce better long term outcomes.

Following South Australia's example, the focus region concept has now been replicated in other states. Victoria has recently announced its own Regional Centre of Culture program, based on the South Australian model. In recognition of the impact of intensive activity on regional communities, Country Arts SA's own future planning is framed around a focus region model.

The transformation has been profound on some individuals who have made life changing decisions, had personal breakthroughs in their arts practice or who feel more content with their place in the community and in themselves. For others it has been an awakening that living in a



community where people can express themselves, and to share that with others, is healthy and fun and there is greater awareness that a community strong in arts is a good place to raise children, so that they grow up knowing how to think creatively and laterally.

People living in cities have these options available to them on a regular basis, even if they don't take advantage of them. The advantage of an intensive program in a small regional community is that it's hard to ignore, and the results are more profound.

A 'critical mass' of people now believe their community has been 'transformed', which carries weight when it comes to local decision making.

Country Arts SA hopes that the legacy of Just Add Water goes beyond this one regional community - that the insights contained in the reports will be useful for communities nationwide embarking on their own community vibrancy strategy.



"...everyone was saying "what an amazing place to live, look at what they do here!" (Council staff)

"There is certainly a strong sense of pride in our arts and culture now, a sense that it has given us a bit of an identity that we can be proud of." (Local contributor)

"We've got our holiday homeowners that are checking the program and making sure that they're down at their houses aligning with particular shows, bringing people with them..." (Council staff)

"...there are people who've actually bought and moved here because of what's going on." (Council staff)

"We've been able to beef up next year's program with private people coming in paying to use our facilities, because of the flow-on effects they've seen in the community...so we get people from outside the region, we get money from outside the region... the economic development is huge. (Council staff)

"It's emerging as more of an opportunity for people to make a living through the arts because a lot of the other areas traditionally here in our region are disappearing... that's a lasting legacy Just Add Water to put artists on the map as legitimately earning a living from their expertise" (Council staff)



Image: *Kondoli (Whale)*, an inflatable storytelling space, artists SpinFX with community, commissioned for Just Add Water, Photo Chris Herzfeld

The *Just Add Water* 2012-2014 Evaluation Reports by Dr Christine Putland are online at www.countryarts.org.au/program/regional-centre-of-culture/just-add-water/

You can also download individual parts of the report:

Just Add Water 2012_14 Evaluation by Dr Christine Putland (full report 4.8mb)

Just Add Water Evaluation Summary (917kb)

Just Add Water Evaluation Part 1 (1mb)

Just Add Water Findings Part 2 (3.1mb)

Just Add Water Program Summary & Statistics (1.2 mb)

Just Add Water Cultural Places Program Analysis (1.7 mb)

A short film by Marty McNicol, was produced to show evidence that participation in, and exposure to arts in its myriad forms, has changed the lives of these people and the place they live.

See it online at

<https://thedirtsa.com.au/project/just-add-water/>