

CREATIVE RESPONDERS

Podcast Transcript: Season 3, Episode 10

Episode Title

Putting the pieces together: How the City of Melbourne is bringing arts-led strategies into disaster preparedness

[Acknowledgement of Country]

Scotia: We're at Arts House in North Melbourne -- it's a beautiful old building on a main street with cobbled gutters, right on a tram line...

Originally built as North Melbourne's town hall, the building was repurposed as a contemporary arts space in 2004.

You might have been here to see a piece of theatre or contemporary dance.

But today the conversation inside is about floods, rather than art.

[AUDIO: Atmosphere from the room of people talking]

It's a hive of activity, with people engaged in all parts of emergency management working together in response to a disaster.

Local council are liaising with The Lost Dogs home on the logistical challenges of rescuing and rehoming animals from the facility.

Community leaders are providing support, sharing resources and local knowledge. There are faith services, transport workers, people with strong community ties and local business owners all adding context, parts of the puzzle that might be missing.

Christine: a mixture of representatives from City of Melbourne, some neighbouring councils that we work closely with

Scotia: Emergency services are here too -- every acronym you can think of -- adding how they can best support the effort.

Christine: some emergency services agencies, the usual ones like Victoria Police and Fire Rescue Victoria and SES

Scotia: But this isn't an active disaster situation.

It's a simulation exercise run by the City of Melbourne.

Scotia: This is Christine Drummond.

Christine: I'm the emergency management coordinator for the City of Melbourne.

Christine: we always pick a risk that's been identified as a potential risk in our community. So, you know, there's fires, floods, terrorist incidents, pandemics. So each year the emergency services agencies and myself will decide on which risk we should try and, you know, practice, if you like

Scotia: They bring those agencies together to tackle preparedness or response to a particular disaster.

Christine: So in a normal exercise, basically we'd run through trying to test the plans, trying to work through who would be doing what in relation to an incident, and then talking through what some of the community needs might be and how we might respond to them.

Scotia: And in 2022, they thought they'd try something different.

Christine and the Arts House Team came up with a concept

Christine put the idea to the usual emergency management agencies.

Christine: I actually went to them we have a quarterly meeting and I said, How do you feel about doing it differently?

Scotia: This time the exercise would include people from the local community -- and it would be facilitated by artists.

[Creative Responders Intro Music]

I'm Scotia Monkivitch... and this is Creative Responders, a podcast from the Creative Recovery Network that explores how creativity and the Arts can support and strengthen communities to grow and connect through the disaster experience.

In this episode, we'll hear what happened when the City of Melbourne engaged artists in the co-design and facilitation of a preparedness exercise, working with the North Melbourne community to imagine better models of response and recovery.

Their 2022 disaster simulation, Exercise Torrent, engaged a group of artists and writers to develop a provocative scenario for emergency management professionals, business leaders and community members to interact with.

We get to be a fly on the wall as they use that process to explore what an effective community-led response would look like if their local community was impacted by a flood disaster.

How does engaging artists in the process from the get-go change an exercise like this? How does effective preparedness set up a community for better outcomes when disaster hits? And what windows of opportunity does an arts-based approach offer into aspects of preparedness often overlooked by traditional processes, like accessibility?

[Theme music ends]

Christine: In the past, we've had more discussion focused exercises with other emergency services agencies and councils and departments.

Scotia: She runs this multi-agency exercise every year. But this year Christine knew early on that she wanted it to be different.

Christine: This time what we did though was we focused on the relief and recovery and very early on I decided I want it to be working with the community, not for the community.

Scotia: The Emergency Management Department at City of Melbourne had partnered with Arts House before, on a six-year project called Refuge.

Refuge brought together local residents, artists, scientists, Elders and experts from the world of emergency services to explore, through art, how the survival of the individual is linked to the survival of community, and what role we can each play in a disaster situation.

Christine: the first year of Refuge they went through simulating opening up Arts House, North Melbourne Town Hall over a weekend. letting members of the public come in and having information and services there as if it was an emergency relief center during a flood actually back then as well.

Scotia: Over six years, the Refuge project worked in parallel to the theme of the council's emergency management exercise.

Christine: So we ran with the same theme. So we had Pandemic, we had Heatwave, we'd run a similar theme and, and work together.

Scotia: As the Refuge project was drawing to a close, Arts House and the Emergency Management Department, who both sit within the City of Melbourne, were exploring what the next phase of their collaboration might look like...

Christine: Late last year, that's when I approached Sarah at Arts House and said, Would you be interested if we ran it at Arts House?

Scotia: The Arts House team were keen to open their doors to host the exercise and they also proposed collaborating even more closely in the process - what if they brought in creatives to co-design and facilitate the exercise?

Christine: This Exercise Torrent it was the first time we've really run the exercise completely jointly. So that was sort of the culmination of it.

Scotia: The exercise would still involve the usual emergency management agencies, and still rely on an emergency scenario.

Christine: we have done Exercise Contagion, which was about a pandemic, of course, and that happened before we actually had COVID. We've had highrise fires. We've had terrorism. We had an earthquake exercise last year. And when we were developing when I was developing the earthquake exercise, people were like, Oh, well, that's never going to happen in the City of Melbourne. And then we did have a small earthquake.

Scotia: But there would be differences -- it would be run at Arts House, for one, a civic space - but one that is known as a creative hub for gathering and exchange

And community organisations would be involved in the process, leveraging the engagement and growing relationships that Arts House had been building within the North Melbourne community over many years.

Christine: we had some community members and we also had local, some local organizations, local to North Melbourne that were also present.

Scotia: In this preparedness exercise the focus was on the relief and recovery phase of the flood disaster.

Christine: we obviously had the flood as a scenario we ran through, you know, in theory for the exercise, what had happened. But we didn't focus on who was doing what in terms of managing the flood. It was what are we doing once the impact has hit us and how are we working through it?

Scotia: And artists were to be central to the exercise, involved in the writing group that planned the scenario and on the day as facilitators.

Christine: And I guess the, the really exciting thing about this exercise was that it was a, a fusion of, I'd say traditional emergency management and artistic because we actually ran the exercise, Jen Rae, and myself we co facilitated and we also had two other artists who were helping us run the the various sessions and activities throughout the day.

Christine: what I did right from the beginning with all of the people that were part of developing the exercises, I said I want us to be working with the community, not for the community. I think in the past, with some of the emergencies agencies and state government and whatnot have tried to help people but sort of done it for them rather than with them. So the whole real aim of the exercise was to listen and learn and to take on board different views and not to try and impose things in what the emergency services might thought would be the best way. But to listen and find out how people you know, how people wanted to receive information, who they trusted, what it was they needed, what was important to them. So it was that kind of a focus that we were looking at.

Christine: So with the community members and the the local agencies, we actually had a couple of mini workshops just to run them through what an exercise was about and what we were trying to achieve

[AUDIO: atmosphere from the introductory session of Exercise Torrent]

Christine: What I'm going to do now is I'm going to introduce Jen and I'm going to introduce Kate and Jonathan, who are also going to be our key partners that we're working with today. So Jen is actually Dr. Jen Rae, and she's an award winning artist and researcher whose expertise is centred around cultural responses to climate change. So specifically, the role of artists.

Scotia: Facilitating with Jen and Christine are two other artists, Kate Sulan, who's the founding artistic director of performance company Rawcus

Christine: Kate's a performance maker, a facilitator, and one of the artists in the Refuge Project since its inception.

Kate: Hello, everyone. We're so glad that you're here to do this exercise with us today. And we thought that it would be great to just get a quick snapshot of who's in the room, because there's so many people here from so many different places.

Scotia: And Jonathan Craig

Christine: a writer, policy adviser, audio producer and accessibility consultant.

Scotia: This creative team were also involved in the writing group to develop the scenario used on the day and designing how that would be played out in the room.

Christine: So obviously it's a scenario, it's a pretend exercise, but we have based it on real information. Our partners from SES have given us good details. So it's a possibility that what could happen, what we've outlined could happen here in North Melbourne. [00:09:25][17.2]

Scotia: Now in the room, that work is used as prompts given during discussions, working through the different challenges that would come up in a response and recovery situation.

[UPSOT OF SCENE SETTING VIDEO]

Scotia: And it's shared with the people there through videos simulating news broadcasts from a flood situation.

Christine: So you've got a realistic scenario and you've got enough information to use as what we call as injects so you can keep the scenario flowing and the discussion flowing.

It gets the gets the thought, processes flowing and conversation going.

Scotia: Having the creative lens of Jen, Kate and Jonathan transformed the exercise entirely -- how it was run, the focus of the sessions.

It changed the approach, the mood.

Looking out into the room you don't see a cluster of emergency management officials here, a group of artists there, the community members watching on, listening passively.

Instead, everyone is mixed in together, something that was planned from the start. Christine had put it to the emergency management agencies, months earlier.

Christine: and I said, I'm going to plan to mix you up and put you on tables with not your usual people you would be sitting with, but members of the public and other councils as well. And they were up for that too. So there was a sense of coming into something quite new and quite different.

Scotia: Even in the informal moments, it's clear this approach was having an impact.

Christine: some community members can be quite frightened or put off by uniforms and will not respond if someone in a uniform comes to their door or can be confronting to them because of their their cultural background or their own previous experiences

Christine: there was a uniformed emergency services agency rep who came along to the exercise and he I caught up with him a few days later and he said to me, You know what? He said, I never really understood when people said I'm frightened of someone in uniform he said, but that table you put me on and some of those community members that I was able to speak to, I understand now, he said. But I was also able to talk to them and explain to them who I was and what my job was, he said. And I think they understood me a bit better, too. So it's it's breaking down those barriers and trying to learn more about each other as well.

Scotia: It's hard to overstate the significance of a day like this. It's a really valuable part of the work Christine does at council.

We know that when communities are well prepared, they are able to respond and recover better when disasters occur.

The exercise of bringing together people with different lived experience is key to building the foundation of co-operation that's required for a community to act effectively in a disaster situation.

Sociologist and writer, Richard Sennet, argues that learning the skill of cooperation is one of the most urgent challenges facing modern society. Sennet believes co-operation requires more than good will: it is a craft requiring a set of skills that over time we have begun to lose.

In a society where traditional ways of collaborating with our community have been weakened, how do we find new ways to strengthen the connections that help us be more skilful in living with others? and how do we find opportunities to practice these skills that equip us to cope when challenges arise?

As we look to new models of preparedness and response, how do we activate a whole of community approach where everyone has a role to play, and as Christine said earlier, where disaster management services are working WITH not FOR the community?

In the past, the annual preparedness exercise had been very focussed on process and the ways different government and service agencies interact with each other in a disaster scenario

Bringing community organisations and artist facilitators into Exercise Torrent, opened up the opportunity for support agencies and local government to engage with the community in ways they hadn't before...

It also offered new entry points into areas of preparedness that aren't always well-served by traditional processes, like accessibility.

You can see that impact in real time as Jonathan Craig takes the floor.

Jonathan: So this is the first time that I've been involved in such an exercise, and I was really interested in the question of what was going to be the impact of doing an exercise like this, where we where we play pretend. And I think that the answer to this for me, which I've found through the process of of the exercise, is, you know, that we get the chance through this to rehearse the kind of empathy and listening and and being ready to, you know, embrace the views and needs of people who are different from ours, you know, before the event, which is is pretty stressful in the moment and, you know, where things are moving very, very quickly.

Jonathan Craig: So I'm going to break us out again, and I want you to chat about the questions that are on your piece of paper that are upside down on your tables. Now, I'd like you to flip over those pieces of paper theatrically, if you will.

Jonathan: So I have a condition called osteoporosis pseudo glioma syndrome. Nobody has to try and spell that. It is a very rare condition that causes blindness and brittle bones as a result of the same genetic anomaly. And I guess the point that I was making when I was talking was that because my condition is so rare, there's only around 3 to 4000 of me in the world. I am the kind of person that is impossible to plan for.

Scotia: But planning is needed when you're preparing for a disaster.

That's the focus of Jonathan's session -- how can you think about preparedness in a way that accounts for all individuals and their needs, without having to get specific about what every single one of those needs might be?

How can we prepare for relief centres that anticipate and adapt to the needs of everyone in the community?

Jonathan: you know, in policy, you're always trying to create plans and systems and plans and systems are really awesome. And one of the things that we're going to get out of this is improving plans and systems. But you you know, one of the ways that you improve plans and systems is by connecting with people as individuals and bringing into the table those lived

experiences of people who can't be put into cohorts. Because in the end, in an emergency situation, every person is an individual, regardless of whether they're wearing a uniform or whether they're riding a wheelchair or, you know, using a white cane. They're all just a person.

Jonathan: Well, I want to I want to really think about two different questions. I want to think about how do we make plans and build systems that work well for everyone? And also how do we listen and connect with people as individuals in situations like this?

Jonathan: Many of you, most of you will be in a situation in in this kind of event like this where you will need to become listeners. And I think that's one of the great things that we're rehearsing here, is we're rehearsing empathy. We're rehearsing the things that that a plan, you know, can only partially can only partially do.

Jonathan: And the plan will be better for it. But also, you know, we this group of people in this room as individuals, I hope will be better listeners.

Scotia: Jonathan deftly balances the transition from micro to macro - reflecting on personal experience and moving outwards to the bigger picture of neighbours, family, whole of community

Jonathan: Sometimes, you know, people see me as the person who needs help in a situation like this. And yes, I admit, I accept that that is actually that is true. I am a person who will need help in this situation, but also I am a person who has something to offer.

And I don't want you to just think about people with disabilities. I really want you to think about all people, because as I said before, in situations like this, people's needs change. People's people who was previously incredibly self-sufficient were suddenly become very reliant on systems and on individuals to help them. And I also want you to think in unusual ways about what people might be able to offer, what people, you know, might be able to offer, what their skills are that might not immediately be recognised by these systems. Let's have a chat.

Scotia: Each of the roundtable groups shares with the room some highlights from their conversations prompted by Jonathan's session

Jonathan: I was not completely sure how people would respond, how the conversations would move, how the rhythm of the room would feel. And so it was a real, really a delight. I don't use that word often as well. A real like really pleasing to me when I could audibly hear that the room was was, was pulsing and moving well and that was just so nice.

Christine: I was watching people's reactions during Jonathan's session, and there were so many people who were just really involved in the discussion, in the conversation and listening to Jonathan nodding their heads, just really engaged. You know, I just thought it was great.

Christine: Whereas in previous exercises, I think people kind of think, oh yeah, well, you know, my role as an emergency management coordinator or I work at Fire Rescue Victoria, so that's what I'm looking at. But Jonathan led the the session so that people were thinking, okay, so

what about me first as a person and then my role and then how I relate to it. And I think that was really great.

Jonathan: I think that what's different from the kinds of events that I might have attended or known about is kind of creative and lateral thinking and thinking about things and systems and people in ways that go beyond what is the typical purview of emergency services agencies.

Scotia: The input of the artist team and the creative methodologies they employ brought a new layer of depth to the relational aspects of the exercise.

We know that communities with strong social ties have better outcomes in a disaster situation so a crucial part of effective preparedness is finding ways to engage in the deep listening and empathy that Jonathan talks about -

Things like strengthening community networks, building trust between community members and service agencies, considering specific needs for different sectors of the community, engaging in decision-making and information sharing *before* a disaster occurs, help us to be more prepared to respond when it does.

The trust built into these community relationships through Arts House's long term engagement meant that participants understood their contribution would be valued, supported and highlighted within this exchange process.

There's something else artists bring to a disaster preparedness exercise though. Something that can be easily overlooked or underestimated.

Christine: it was a great way of doing sessions, putting a bit more fun into it. If I can say fun in emergencies, people say that's, you know, that's a contradiction. But it people were engaged.

Scotia: Arts-based processes have the ability to put people into a mindset of creativity and play, it's highly participatory which activates innovative thinking and encourages different ways of communicating.

The use of a fictional scenario, even if it closely resembles reality, provides a creative space where traditional power structures are removed, giving participants an opportunity to take on roles outside of their usual perspective.

Christine: They were, you know, they weren't stepping out of the room, looking at their mobiles, looking at laptops. It kept the pace running. And I thought it worked really well. I thought as a group we worked really well. I thought the process was great, having the artists involved

Jonathan: I actually think it's an interesting line to walk where, you know, we're doing this, this kind of rehearsal of a situation that would be quite stressful to deal with in real life. And so you have to acknowledge that the situation, you know, is a stressful situation and and not disrespect that. But also, you know, there has to be and this is what's bringing the arts into it really brings is a sense of play and a sense of, you know, a sense of creativity which might not have been present otherwise.

Scotia: Having Jen Rae as your facilitator means you're invited into contemplative spaces that enable new perspectives to be presented and positions to be gently challenged.

Jen's commitment to transdisciplinary collaboration drives her creative practice, inviting a reimagining of possible futures with deeper awareness of intersectionality and cultural politics .

Having Kate Sulan tell you to slow down time and invite reflection is very different to being asked process questions by a colleague in the SES.

Kate's process builds inclusive spaces and supports working with complex power dynamics in the room.

More than 20 years of creative facilitation has equipped both Jen and Kate with a bounty of tools to hold complex and difficult conversations with nuance, safety and creativity.

Jonathan: And I think that's really something that Jen brought, you know, with, you know, the way that she facilitated and Jen and Kate running these popcorn sharing sessions where people only had a minute to share all of the insights that they had from their table. And it got really fun and the things were moving really quickly. So, you know, bringing, bringing play into it can really, you know, be an incredible thing. And it doesn't detract at all from the seriousness of the work that we're doing.

Scotia: That sense of openness and engagement that the artist facilitators brought to the table had another big role to play too.

Remember the importance Christine placed on bringing the community and local businesses into Exercise Torrent?

That was different this year, something challenging and new for the people running the exercise.

How to do that in a way that didn't feel like us vs them - the disaster services representatives as the experts and the community members as those who need to be helped in a disaster.

How to put everyone on an equal playing field in these discussions, and make sure someone with no background in disaster management felt just as comfortable sharing their ideas and reflections as someone who comes to these exercises every year, as part of their work.

This is where arts methodologies can be central to making that work - they are designed in a way that encourages equitable engagement - a level playing field where all participants are equal in the development of the narrative,

Here's Jen Rae.

Jen: Well, oftentimes when you're working in an arts context, your audience are your participants understand risk a little bit differently. They're willing to be challenged. You know,

they come with a certain understanding of what they're entering in today's event and so forth. We had it was it was flipped in a certain way, to a certain degree, where people were coming in, didn't quite know what the process was going to be. And, you know, they came with, you know, different disciplinary knowledges or expertise. You know, this the whole purpose of this is is to learn and learn from each other and that everyone in the room is an expert at something. And so by not having rigid structures, but something that would allow people to feel included in in a process, that their voice would be heard and that we were offering a space to hear and listen to different perspectives.

Scotia: The participants felt it too - from the disaster management service providers, to the community members and also the creatives who had been part of co-designing how the day would unfold...

Sarah: it's been really lovely. Um, just kind of feeling the room and seeing how everyone is having these very quiet but in depth conversations with each other. And I've been to emergency service exercises before, and I feel like the big difference from previous ones I've been to and the one today is that there's a feeling of like there's definitely a feeling of joy and warmth in the room, which is unusual when you're talking about disaster preparedness and there's a feeling of connectedness. Having the tables mixed up with community members and emergency service staff and council workers is yeah, isn't something that has usually happened in these exercises before.

Lorna: [00:00:10] If we can rebuild trust over and over again. I have heard people both before I came today and today in that room downstairs. I've heard people talking about the need to build trust in the community with politicians, entrusting agencies, trusting the way in which we work and assemble the data on which we base our ideals and our actions. It's a much bigger question than I can confront, but it's one that I'm really happy to examine in this kind of engaged grouping.

John: The one thing I really liked about here was the connection with the the communities that are not not well represented out there. And it's just having that link in there to understand that during an emergency, they need support. And this is the best way that we can do that to to do to help them out, to understand, to make them safe and get them out of the emergency and back into normal life.

Sarah: And I feel like you can. Yeah. Without even hearing what people are saying, you can kind of feel that energy in this space and that kind of openness. And I feel like there's a lot of introspective-ness maybe happening as well, lots of kind of reflective conversations and also generative conversations. And people are maybe thinking, you know, this isn't necessarily like the typical way the exercises have run before.

people have really embraced people's ideas as well. And I think that kind of openness to yeah, to bring in new ideas and knowledge is and ways of doing things is, is incredibly brave and is the only way that things are going to change as well.

Scotia: That last comment was from Sarah Rowbattam.

Sarah: I work as a creative producer at Art House

Scotia: Sarah was a producer on Refuge, so she's familiar with the value of collaboration between artists and disaster management services when it comes to preparedness.

She was also a core part of the co-design process for Exercise Torrent and part of setting the agenda of community engagement that informed who would be in the room.

She says something that sticks with me, about the different strengths people are bringing to the table on a day like this.

Sarah: I think artists are amazing at holding space, at holding complex issues and the complexities around climate disaster and disasters

Sarah: I think they're thinking about the nuance and the individual and how to perhaps focus on things that are that could be around the emotional, the cultural, the spiritual kind of elements.

I also think they're really great at playing in the dark and experimentation.

Scotia: That's the artist's role. Not so different from a disaster simulation.

Sarah: And, you know, within these emergency exercises, that's exactly what the emergency services are doing. They're hypothesizing and they're practicing for something for when it really happens. And artists also kind of hypothesize and play with big questions around the world.

Scotia: This ability to hypothesize and imagine future scenarios is key to preparing for the future we are heading into.

The climate crisis is already presenting unprecedented challenges to communities all over the world and we know these will continue to grow in scale in coming decades.

Part of facing this challenge means reimagining futures and adapting our approach.

New thinking for a new reality.

As Preparedness becomes an increasingly important part of how we plan into an uncertain future, the encouraging thing about programs like Exercise Torrent is they show what's possible when we integrate arts-led processes into disaster planning at every stage, not just for recovery programs.

Bringing creatives into the process unlocks ways to imagine future scenarios and also, deepens people-centred approaches to community resilience, helping to build the relationships and levels of co-operation required to meet the challenges that lay ahead.

Nothing makes that clearer than the closing speech of the day -- it's the Director of City Safety, Security and Amenity, Dean Robertson, Christine's boss at the council.

He thanks everyone and speaks on the importance of the connections made.

Dean Robertson: The time to meet people is not when an emergency is underway. Right. So just being here, having something to write, having a cup of coffee and that sort of stuff is really building relationships. So when something happens you go, Oh yeah, I saw you at North Melbourne.

Scotia: Then he drives home just how essential preparedness has become.

Dean Robertson: This is an annual exercise. And when we walk through that door, we don't go, well, we're done. And we keep going, because, as you know, there will be a flood in the next 12 months in North Melbourne. It is guaranteed because we had the earthquake scenario. We had an earthquake. We had the pandemic scenario. We had a pandemic. Right. So it's coming.

Scotia: This isn't the end of the process for Christine and the team.

There were ideas generated at Arts House in Exercise Torrent that they will carry forward.

Jen Rae could see it in action, with the ideas that will be picked up and fed into Council's work, and those that will be carried forward at an individual and community level by the people in the room.

Jen: We got some really great game changing ideas today. And I think what was really exciting about that was that we had people who had been through different disasters in recent years. They have been there tuning in to what's working in different communities, and they can see how those ideas can be applied, but that they can bring in an understanding that every disaster is different and therefore you have to have an understanding of the context. And what we saw today was that people were thinking about ideas that they've seen elsewhere, but then also seeing how it actually can be applied in North Melbourne, but also thinking about intersectionality and thinking about inclusion and thinking about the multitudes and ways in which we can all communicate. So that's that I think was one of the most exciting things in the room, was actually having that complexity and people being able to articulate that complexity.

Scotia: At a council level those ideas will start to have an immediate impact when the exercise ends, feeding into localised preparedness plans being generated with council.

Christine's team are working to develop disaster preparedness plans for each neighbourhood across the City of Melbourne.

Christine: So you know, have a North Melbourne plan so that it's specific to the special features and special things that are important to North Melbourne so that we can drill down to that next level. So if something does happen that impacts North Melbourne, we know the tram is important, we know there are certain groups we can contact to get information disseminated. We know, you know what the Lost Dogs Home capacity is, we've got that local knowledge so it's that next level. So that's the ideal that we could do that for each of the neighbourhoods we have in City of Melbourne.

Scotia: Just as missing pieces in a jigsaw puzzle prevent the whole picture from forming, disaster preparedness without meaningful community engagement is incomplete.

The collaboration between two different areas of council - Arts House and Emergency Management is a great example of how bringing arts-led strategies into the process provides a different lens for people to participate more readily.

But putting the puzzle together requires patience and vision - building relationships and trust over time.

It also requires commitment from local governments and people like Christine who see the value in investing and developing this work.

Christine: I think it's important to recognize that if you're working with artists that you know, you're going to have to spend some money on doing it to do it well as well. So if you're asking artists to come along and be part of it, then you're going to need to pay them-so it's a real joint initiative and develop it together.

Scotia: And organisations like Arts House that are actively exploring the role that artists and civic spaces play in working with the community and emergency services...

and showing what it looks like when arts-based programs are brought into a disaster management space

Christine: I remember saying this at the time to someone, you know, with the first Refuge project that was run, some of the projects, you could hear children laughing in the relief center that was being run. Now, you don't often hear children laughing in a relief center, but why can't you? I mean, I know that it's really sad when there's an emergency going on, but if we open an emergency relief center and we have children there, we've got programs that can keep them engaged and occupied and take their minds off things and also, you know, ease the burden on their parents and family. That's really great. So it's just that other level of looking at things. It doesn't have to all necessarily be the formal approaches that we take, still got to be sound approaches, it's got to be looking at people's needs, but just those different lenses.

Scotia: Our greatest challenge ahead as complex communities is to create ways for all parts of the puzzle to come together, to see their place in forming the bigger picture, to recognise how each one is a different shape, and to understand how they fit with the other pieces.

Christine: it was just a really great experience and and I think it just highlighted all of those things that we've talked about and just the importance of working together. I think that's the whole thing. And when I say that, it's all of us agencies, councils, community members, artists, everybody.

[Creative Responders theme music]

Scotia: Creative Responders is an initiative of the Creative Recovery Network hosted by me, Scotia Monkivitch.

We'd like to thank Christine Drummond, Jonathan Craig, Jen Rae and Kate Sulan for their participation.

Special thanks to Sarah Rowbottam at Arts House for her assistance.

Exercise Torrent is an initiative by the City of Melbourne created with the support of Victoria State Emergency Services and the Department of Families, Fairness and Housing.

Creative Responders is produced by me and my Creative Recovery Network colleague, Jill Robson

Our Sound Engineer is Glen Morrow

Field recordings were by Glen Morrow and studio recordings by Tiffany Dimmack at Glamour and Mayhem studios in Meanjin, Brisbane.

Special thanks to Jess O'Callaghan

Original music composed by Mikey Squire.

If you'd like to find out more about how the arts can support and strengthen communities through the disaster experience visit our website - [Creative Recovery dot net dot au](http://CreativeRecovery.net.au).

This is also where you can find episode transcripts and the archive of all of our documentary and in conversation episodes.

If you'd like to hear more from Jonathan Craig, we'll be releasing a special In Conversation episode with Jonathan as a companion to this, so look out for that in the Creative Responders feed.

You can also head to our archives to find my past conversations with both Jen Rae and Kate Sulan if you'd like to know more about their work and the Refuge project.

Thanks for listening.