



Creating Well

Working Sustainably in Communities

Recommendations for practitioner wellbeing in the
Community Arts and Cultural Development sector



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CRN and CAN acknowledge the country, culture and traditional custodians of the lands and waters upon which we walk, work and live. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people are advised that this publication may contain images of people who are now passed away.

Image courtesy of Susie Blatchford



building support

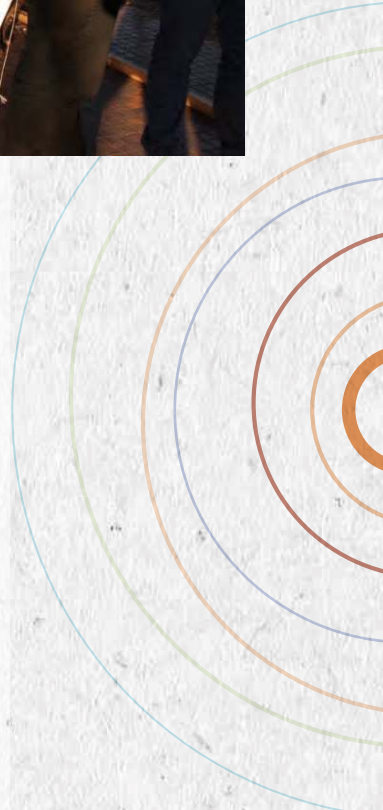
Community Arts and Cultural Development practitioners often work in complex community settings with little preparation or adequate support for the situations they will encounter, putting them at high risk of stress, trauma, post-traumatic stress disorder and burnout.



Image courtesy of Wilurarra Creative

The Creative Recovery Network and Community Arts Network have collaborated on a four year research project, designed to harness the experience and wisdom of the sector's leading practitioners to grow a deeper understanding of the specific support needs for community-based artists.

This research, presented in the Creating Well report, clarifies the consistent challenges faced in community-based practice and calls for the sector as a whole to evolve towards new standards of practice and a framework to better support practitioners in high performance work environments.





key recommendations

Six key recommendations were formulated from the findings of the research with artists from a range of CACD settings, arising from conversations with a broad cross-section of arts practitioners, and based on best practice models in the health and social services sectors.

In considering the mental, physical, and emotional health of high performing community-based practitioners, it is proposed that a combination of professional supervision, peer support and wellbeing programs, underpinned by a sector-wide practice framework, would support sustained excellence and practitioner wellbeing.

A commitment to sustainable practice and practitioner self-care must be a shared responsibility between individual practitioners, and the funding bodies and organisations contracting arts workers for socially engaged projects.

1 Establish a Practice Framework and Code of Conduct

A Practice Framework including a Code of Conduct for practitioners and organisations to support ethical and safe engagement with each other and communities is a long-identified need within the sector.

A CACD Practice Framework will establish a vision for practice that is grounded in the realities of community practice, supported by research and embedded in a set of principles and values that are essential to the work.

2 Build targeted professional development programs

Professional development through training, experiential learning, and formal mentoring programs can address the specialised knowledge and experience required of CACD practitioners and support emerging practitioners in approaching the challenges they will face.

There are currently no coordinated approaches to professional development across the sector. A commitment to establish a national database of opportunities supported by funding from arts organisations and funding bodies to facilitate more development opportunities would support the growth of specialist programs.



3 Establish a professional supervision network

High quality professional supervision is a guided reflection on practice, undertaken through a supportive relationship that is safe enough to positively challenge thinking and practice, occurring in a time-protected setting.

Professional supervision promotes optimal care, safety and wellbeing for practitioners, in accordance

with organisation and professional standards. With a Practice Framework in place, a supervisor with a clinical psychological background could be inducted to work within the CACD context or a supervision training course for CACD workers wishing to become supervisors could be implemented.

4 Embed wellbeing plans and professional supervision into CACD programs

National and state government arts sector bodies and philanthropic organisations have a vital role to play in supporting and funding professional supervision, along with specific wellbeing training for CACD practitioners and organisations.

As key funders of CACD programs and projects, they are central to developing a practice framework to address the needs of a growing CACD workforce.

Contracting organisations need to lead by example. To do this, arts and community organisations presenting CACD programs/projects need to ensure professional supervision and wellness support are embedded into all CACD activity.

It is recommended that all projects include a budget line for professional supervision and that professional supervision is promoted as best practice for all CACD projects and programs.



5 CACD practitioners create individual wellbeing plans

CACD practitioners have a responsibility to maintain professional competence, update knowledge and skills throughout their career, establishing short and long-term professional supervision and wellness programs for themselves when they are working individually or with contracting organisations.

6 Build and maintain a community of practice

The research demonstrated that experienced workers and relatively new workers could both benefit from problem solving issues with colleagues in the CACD community of practice.

Peer support programs are becoming more common as part of an overall approach to psychological health and safety in the workplace and are often standard practice in high-risk organisations.

All CACD projects should have a well planned, integrated, and tailored peer support program supported by funding from the organisations responsible for the development and presentation of CACD programs.

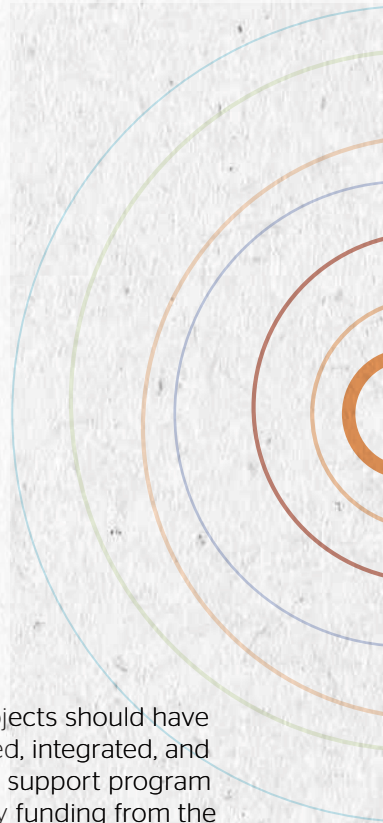


Image courtesy of Michelle Troop



What can I do?

- 1. Talk** with your colleagues about your wellbeing and share good practice. Activate your peer-to-peer networks and build the sector conversation to drive change.
- 2.** As both a contractor or contractee for CACD projects, **question** and **review** contractual arrangements to ensure time and resources are allocated for best practice wellbeing support.
- 3. Talk** to your state government arts and cultural department about the importance of wellbeing support for practitioners and ask for their plans to fund support within CACD projects.
- 4. Join** the working party to develop the CACD Practice Framework. Sign up at www.creativerecovery.net.au/creatingwell

Read the report online or request a printed copy by scanning the QR code.
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