



Dress the Central West Collaborative

Red Ridge (Interior Queensland) Limited
2019

Dress the Central West Collaborative 2019

Purpose

This project used art activities as a fun and exciting approach for healing and coping with the effects of long-term drought. The project aimed to celebrate the region's determination and strength in tackling adversity. The project hoped to bring people together to discuss and reduce the risk of being isolated.

Who

This project was created through a collaboration between regional health service providers, and new networks between the Winton Neighbourhood Centre, Central West Suicide Network, Blackall-Tambo Neighbourhood Centre, Longreach Art and Craft Centre, Flying Doctor Service, Central West Health and Hospital Service, Central West Aboriginal Corporation and Red Ridge.

First Nations Voice:

This project was created by and for Queensland's First Nations communities, in collaboration with external service providers.

Outcomes

Across the four regions, Blackall hosted creative textiles workshops to create wearable art for the showcases, Barcaldine explored themes about respect for each other and care of land through an Aboriginal dream time story about 'Moon Sun and Eclipse', Winton focused on a youth program to inspire confidence and leadership, and Longreach came together to share cultural stories about the land and languages with colourful reflections of the land through drought and through flood.

33 garments were created and presented at 3 separate performances and public showcases.

Showcases successfully collaborated with a community dance group who performed a choreographed dance alongside the catwalk models.

The project included make-up workshops held in Barcaldine which formed a team of 10 makeup artists who led the makeup artistry for all three performances.

Hundreds of attendants were "blown away" by the professionalism and talent of the local community.

Project Lead	Red Ridge (Interior Queensland) Limited
Primary Artform	Craft
Participants	981 participants, all members of the community were involved from young people through to those in their 90's.
LGA	Blackall-Tambo, Barcaldine, Winton and Longreach
Township	Blackall, Barcaldine, Winton and Longreach.
Disaster	Drought Queensland 2019
Amount of source funding	\$139,295 FRRR \$60,000; Tackling Regional Adversity through Integrated Care-Central West Health and Hospital \$66,000; Blackall Tambo Neighbourhood Centre \$5,000; Central West Aboriginal Corporation \$5,000; Access Arts \$3,295

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Preparedness

Building Community Capacity

By bringing service providers together in a collaborative environment, this project connected local strengths and resources, and has built capacity for local decision making. The scale of this project was unprecedented for the region. Project facilitators successfully collaborated to secure further funding and resources to elevate the community's passion and opportunities to grow. Government bodies were led through the project by community members. This created a unique and light-hearted sense of community, with the mayor of one district described as "a roadie" for the project. This project has increased the value of community voices within local project management.

Response

Creating Safe Spaces

The project's theme 'beauty within the drought' encouraged empathetic and colourful reflections on life throughout the drought. It brought together participants of all ages and lived experiences to focus on not what was lost, but to make meaning out of what was found. These positive reflections have created lasting confidence in recovery, sustainability and community problem-solving, and created positive acceptance of conversations around disasters and adversity.

Recovery

Supporting wellbeing and identity

The project's multifaceted process promoted inclusivity, conversation and education. Each program inspired confidence, leadership and adaptive skill building in younger community members, shaping newfound individual outlooks of what they are capable of and generating skills within the future workforce. This project meaningfully celebrated First Nations art and culture, encouraging pride in local traditions, culture and place. The mentorship and lasting cultural products and exhibits pass on cultural knowledge to future generations, creating long-lasting senses of belonging, knowledge and pride.

Prevention

Education and connection

This project transformed understanding of the arts and cultural industries and what they can do for people. There was a strong focus on developing new skills through performance, art making and all elements of event production including props, videography, music, movement, management, logistics and design. This provided many opportunities for mentored participation and has seen participants enter pathways for recreational and professional participation in the arts industry and beyond.

Highlight

"To see our aboriginal community shine the way they did. They took centre stage and they believed in it, and they just drove it. They were so committed. They wanted to make it work and they did. They bought their whole family, it was just wonderful."

Louise Campbell

Red Ridge (Interior Queensland) Limited



Legacy

The completed garments have been exhibited at Grassland Gallery in Tumarumba Galleries in Barcaldine, Winton and Longreach have also expressed an interest in hosting the Dress the Central West Exhibition. Red Ridge The Label is a new First Nations-led commercial fashion label that was inspired and established by the talent discovered during this project.



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Social Capital & Connection

This project was founded through **new connections** between regional health service providers, and established a **new network** between the Winton Neighbourhood Centre, Central West Suicide Network, Blackall-Tambo Neighbourhood Centre, Longreach Art and Craft Centre, Flying Doctor Service, Central West Health and Hospital Service, Central West Aboriginal Corporation and Red Ridge.

By bringing service providers together in a collaborative environment the project permanently **strengthened networks** and capacity to connect local strengths and resources, and has fostered value in and capacity for local decision making.

The workshops promoted ongoing **closeness and affection** between community members by facilitating intergenerational conversations around gratitude, respect and connection to family

Acceptance & Growth

The project's theme 'beauty within the drought' encouraged kind-hearted and colourful reflections on the land throughout drought and throughout flood, allowing communities to unpack **what happened and make meaning out of** their experiences, whilst inspiring community-wide advocacy for environmental improvements.

Barcaldine's exploration of respect through the Aboriginal dream time story 'Moon Sun and Eclipse' created **greater understanding** of community and environmental healing, permanently **broadening perspectives** of cultural meaning and the value of community.

Individually-led stories came to life during the showcases, sharing rural voices and experiences of the drought, to influence the community's **perspective on their lives, the lives of others and the environment around them.**

Links

More information about the project –
<https://www.redridgeinteriorqueensland.com/dress-the-central-west>
<https://frrr.org.au/blog/2020/12/09/dress-the-central-west/>

Legacy of the project -
www.redridgelabel.com.au

Revitalisation & Placemaking

The project's mentoring and coaching model encouraged communities to address unemployment, and has upskilled participants in all facets of the creative and cultural industries. Red Ridge The Label was established as a legacy outcome of this project, shining a spotlight on central western Queensland Aboriginal artists and facilitating long-term **local economic growth.**

The showcases celebrated local talents' skills, professionalism and capacity, giving communities influence over how they are seen by others and assisted **to differentiate** their experiences and knowledge within the Australian rural landscape.

The display of the garments and a photographic summary of the projects at regional galleries provided a unique cultural output that **created an appeal to their place, over other places,** encouraging external recognition, tourism and acclaim.

Identity & Belonging

Winton's youth program inspired confidence, leadership and adaptive skill building in younger community members, shaping newfound individual outlooks of **what they are capable of** and has had a lasting effect on the educational development of young people.

The project celebrated First Nations art and culture, encouraging pride in local traditions, culture and place, whilst passing on cultural knowledge to future generations, creating longevity for **individuals' sense of belonging.**

