CREATIVE RESPONDERS

Podcast Transcript, June 2023
In Conversation with Megan Sheehy and Volker Kuchelmeister

Scotia: Welcome to Creative Responders in Conversation, I'm Scotia Monkivitch from the Creative Recovery Network, and this is our monthly interview series where we hear from creative leaders, disaster management experts, artists and community members who are strengthening disaster planning through creativity.

Children and young people are not always prioritised in disaster recovery but in recent years, there is a growing body of research and an active movement towards understanding how significantly younger members of our community are affected by disasters and how important it is to support them through the recovery process.
Arts modalities have been shown time and time again to be a highly effective way for young people to voice challenging experiences, and today we're exploring a really groundbreaking project in this space that harnessed digital technologies to work with young people in the Yarra Ranges in regional Victoria.

Hard Place / Good Place is the name of the project developed by the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum following a devastating storm in June 2021, and it was thoughtfully designed in collaboration with the fEEL lab at the University of New South Wales as a way to work with young people in the region aged 15 to 25.

The work focusses on lived experiences of being in a 'hard place' or a 'good place' through a collection of personal and community stories, told through Augmented Reality. It was exhibited in the museum as part of The Big Anxiety Festival - a mental health and arts festival.

Today we're speaking with two of the key people behind the project - Megan Sheehy, Director of the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum and Volker Kuchelmeister, lead immersive designer and Senior Research fellow at the University of New South Wales' Felt Experience and Empathy Lab.

Megan has 20 years experience in curatorial and senior leadership positions across the arts, heritage, museums, music and health with a particular focus on cultural programming and arts and wellbeing.

Volker is an award-winning artist, researcher and digital media specialist who is a leading expert in presence, embodiment and place representation for immersive applications. His work in interactive narrative, spatial mapping and immersive experiences is exhibited in museums, galleries and festivals around the world.

We talk through the process of developing the project and the importance of approaching this kind of work with care and sensitivity to the experience of the participants.

We also discuss the broader opportunities for the future of digital storytelling as well as the crucial role that local government and local cultural institutions play in disaster recovery in regional areas.

Please enjoy my conversation with Megan Sheehy and Volker Kuchelmeister.

Scotia: Thank you both for joining me on Creative Responders Hard Place/Good Place is a project we've been following with keen interest so it's really wonderful to have the opportunity to hear from you both about it. Where are you joining us from today Megan I'm on the lands of the Jagera/Turrbal people in Meanjin Brisbane.

Megan: I'm here on Wurundjeri Land in Lilydale today within the Yarra Ranges. So just start by paying respect to ancestors and elders past and present of this place.

Scotia: Well Volker. I understand you very recently arrived back in Australia. We're very grateful for you to make the time despite your jet lag. Where are you joining us from?

Volker: I'm on Gadigal land in the Eora Nation from Sydney.

Scotia: Well, welcome home.

Volker: Thank you.

Scotia: Megan. You're the director of the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum, which is in Lilydale in Victoria. Could you start off by telling us a bit about the Yarra Ranges community there and how you particularly come to be part of it?

Megan: So yeah, Yarra Ranges is quite a big geographic area to the east of Melbourne. It starts about an hour east of Melbourne in Lilydale, which is quite a suburban area and spans out to very rural areas that are mostly National Park. It covers about two and a half thousand square kilometres, so it's a geographically very large area and the museum's remit is to cover that entire region. So I started as the director of the museum about coming up two years in September, but have quite a history with the museum when when it was first opened as a regional museum, which was back in 2011, I was involved with the team back then and then became the community heritage officer and then curator at the museum for a while. So I really got to sink my teeth into what's special about this place and the different stories of the museum. So having the opportunity to come back and as the as the director has been a really amazing opportunity for me.

Scotia: Oh, what great links of relationship. Really wonderful. The Yarra Ranges was the epicentre of a violent storm that swept through Victoria in June, 2021 with really significant impacts to the community.

Megan, can you give us a bit of a context for this storm? Because, you know, talking to a lot of the residents, it was, you know, so immensely impactful from someone outside, it wouldn't necessarily have been seen to be.

Megan: So the storm was very isolated. It happened on the night of June 2021, and it was a really unusual weather event that hit about a 20 kilometre radius. But as an impact, 25,000 trees. So 122 properties were damaged and 72 of those properties were destroyed. And the people living in that area, it's the kind of area where you've got one road in and one road out. So a lot of people were trapped and able to get help. They didn't have power for multiple weeks and were just waiting for the SES to come and help them. So it was a very isolated but difficult experience for those for the community that were in and around Kalorama where the eye of the storm was.

Scotia: Well people live there because of the relationship to those trees so when you hear that number and you can understand that great ecological grief that we've been hearing has been so powerful.

Megan: A lot of people speak about the the difference in the landscape and their relationship to it after the storm, when you drive across the ridge, you can see views you've never seen before because of all the trees that have fallen. And one of the things that we kept hearing with this project was that people live in this area because it's beautiful, these big, tall trees. But now, as soon as they hear the wind pick up, they're terrified of that. And their relationship to tall trees, which is something which is beautiful and strong and a source of so much well-being, have become a source of fear. And we are seeing people move out of the region because of that.

Scotia: So complex, isn't it? Complex. At what point did you realise that you wanted to develop a project for with the museum as part of the recovery and, and that young people would be the focus for that.

Megan: So the storms came through in June 2021, and I started in the role in September. And compared to when I used to work at Yarra Ranges, the community was absolutely a community in recovery with with COVID lockdowns and then the storm on top. There was a real sense of quite desperate need in the community. It wasn't really until it was coming up to the anniversary, first anniversary of the storms that we thought about how what role we could play as a museum in this in this community that really needed support of all different kinds. And it was a lot of conversations within the broader council and community about mental health and wellbeing as well. And so with an existing relationship with the Big Anxiety Festival and knowing that that was coming to Melbourne, we saw that as an opportunity to really delve into those needs and to and to shift what we were doing as a museum towards those those needs.

Scotia: And so this is where you come in Volker. You are the lead immersive design and research fellow at the University of New South Wales, fEEL acronym for the felt experience and empathy lab. Your interactive installations and video projects are being exhibited in galleries, festivals all over the world. And I know that you have extensive experience working with trauma impacted individuals and communities where you have used augmented reality and other storytelling techniques. Can you describe a little about some of your previous work and where you've explored unpacking these difficult community experiences.

Volker: Yeah, we focus in our research lab on community engagement, mental health, wellbeing and the important aspect is to work closely with the community. It's sort of a bottom up approach we work in a co-design model, and that sort of allows our collaborators to co, be co-authors in projects. It's not that we engage with communities on a level that we record the stories, go away, build something and maybe bring them in at

the end again but it's more like an iterative process where we work with people to tell their story, help them to tell the story in an immersive experience. So that's at the centre of it. An example from 2019 we worked with the Parragirls, that was the former residents of the Parramatta Girls Home in Sydney in Sydney's west, and they were sort of taken from their families into institutional care and those are girls in moral danger and I put that in quotes, 'moral danger' and a lot of abuse happened in this institution over the years and we gave the women today in their 60s and 70s, an opportunity to tell their story, their side of things. It was just around the time of the Royal Commission into Institutional Child Abuse, and that was sort of a good moment to record the stories, but also not to just record the stories but make them part of the process of developing an immersive artwork. The outcome was a 30 minute film shot or produced in 360 degree in a 360 degree theatre. We run that at UNSW and it was quite successful project in terms of giving the women an opportunity to tell their story to a wider audience. The project was travelling as a virtual reality installation in film festivals all over the world really. And, yeah a follow up project from Parragirls was then working with other museums and institutions on similar projects. For instance, the Uti Kulintjaku collective this group, working out of Alice Springs in the APY Lands, invited us to do a project with them, also to collaborate in a collaborative fashion. It was a VR piece. We finished in 2020…2019. So our approach is really community driven and sort of a bottom up approach.

Scotia: and using very contemporary forms and is that one of the reasons or one of the kind of conditions that came around when you realised children and young people were needing like, what was it how was it, Meagan, that you connected in with the young people of your region as being a really important priority group to work with?

Megan: When we thought about doing a project in relation to the storms and lived experience storytelling, we knew would be the focus of that because the technology was coming from UNSW and Volker's team. We decided to talk to or collaborate closely with our recovery team at Yarra Council, which was set up in response to COVID and storm impact. And a lot of the people in that team, a couple in particular social workers on the ground working really closely with the community. So it was through those conversations that we determined the audience or the participants more to the point and who was going to get the most impact from working on a potential augmented reality project, but also whose voices have not really been heard in the in the recovery process. So our recovery team identified that young people, this particular age group from 15 to 25, there was nothing for them in the recovery process. So they were really left, you know, left there kind of going, okay, we've got a house half built again, or you've got a physical home to live in as an interim. But there was no processing of of what had happened. So we worked with our Recovery Directorate to recruit the participants for this project. And we did we did a call for participants that was very clear in what was being asked. We were seeking people who wanted to be advocates on behalf of that age group in the region, who wanted to share their stories of what had happened in order to try to help people to understand what had happened and what they wanted people to know about how that experience had changed their relationship to where they live and the place that they live. So we did a call, a public call out, and it went through our youth advisory group to council, which a number of participants came through that pathway. And then a few other participants came through particular social and support workers that were around the community who were working with people who were ready to tell their stories and who identified that those young people would really benefit from this kind of storytelling project.

Scotia: It's interesting, you've used a couple of terms there like people who are ready because it everyone comes in with a different opportunity or time to be able to feel that

they can be sitting in those places of vulnerability. But also what we're really strongly aware of is that the voice of children and young people in recovery programming or in thinking about recovery strategies is very lacking. So these kind of projects are so vital in order to give them a platform to raise their their perspectives and their opinions.

One of the reasons that art modalities are so effective in working with children and young people is that you can really be really limitless and provide so many different modes of expression. Can you talk about the process of working with the young people on Hard Place / Good Place and how you approached the collaboration to determine what they wanted to share and express through their work and how they could see this as an opportunity for leadership.

Megan: That's something we thought a lot about, and we did quite a lot of preparatory work before we even decided to go ahead with the project. We worked with a psychologist who'd been working in the disaster recovery space to do essentially a psychosocial risk analysis of whether this project was actually going to be beneficial for those young people and participants who were coming in. And that really helped clarify that direction and how we worked with those young people. The main framing that we got from that was centering what the young people want at all times want to be led by the young people, what they what they're capable of, what they're comfortable of. No assumptions in that space.

Scotia: Volker, you use the term co-collaboration which is in a way being framed by Megan in terms of an approach, but how do you sort of see that happening within your work and particularly within this group of young people that you were working with?

Volker: It probably started started very clear, making very clear statements what is going to be involved in the project. And for instance, you know, we have to go to their place, to their home to scan the environment or scan objects which are related to the narrative. So first of all, you have to lay out how the project and how the process is evolving and how the process works for them and how much time they have to spend and invest and what the outcome is at the end. Right? So after those sort of ground rules are laid out, you can then go to the individual and work closely with them. We did that over a period of a couple of days in the Yarra Ranges, visiting participants in the home and the initial conversation at that point, I think there was an initial conversation in the first place from the psychologist, from the council, I believe, before we came in. So they had sort of a general idea which approach it's all about and how it's going to what the outcome is going to be. So over a couple of days, a visit to participants and their families, we talked to them, just an informal discussion or conversation. What they want to tell us, what are some of the features in their place they would like to have they would like to be part of the project. And then we started with the kids to 3D scan some of the objects in the environment in the home. For instance, one participant, she fell down a set of stairs. She was very scared going down those stairs. It was all slippery at the time outside. And during the storm they had to take cover and also go down those stairs. So she she talked about the experience of being scared, scared for her life, really, because trees came down left and right and the set of stairs is sort of the centrepiece of her, of her story. So the story revolved around those stairs and in the gallery it was represented as a 3D scan of the stairs, going down through the floor level of the museum, into the basement or to the lower ground level. So we did find those objects and places, 3D scanned them and then recorded the story. And first it was also important to involve the kids in a bit of a technical level as well that they're interested in. So we gave them an iPad and experiment a little bit with the 3D scanning. At the end of the day it turned out to be more efficient if we do the final scan ourselves with them present just to have this quality scan. But it was an opportunity for the kids to try out

the technology, which was, I think, an important part. So a little bit of skill transfer at the same time.

Scotia: Mmm, so important in these projects, isn't it? So, Megan, as the museum initiating the work, you have a duty of care for the people you're working with. So how did you approach the care element of this project? Was there any additional supporting to manage that side of things, given that it was still within a very early history of storm impact?

Megan: Yeah so one of the pieces of advice out of the psychosocial risk analysis that we did was around the framing, but also that we find a, initially, we were looking for a narrative therapist, but eventually we ended up with a psychologist who had a background as a journalist, which is awfully handy to work one on one with each young person initially to discuss the project and to help them to think through whether that's something that they were going to be okay with doing, and then also to talk through what their story might be and get it to a point of being able to articulate a narrative that they might be comfortable sharing and to identify the object or place that they would then work with Volker and his team to scan. So a lot of work went into creating that that duty of care for the participants. Mainly it was around having access to professional support if and when they needed that support. And as an interesting reflection, less people engaged with that support than we than we thought. But the the ability to have it there and and to be able to offer, continuously offer that support as part of the project was really critical to making sure people were held and supported. We changed a lot of things along the way. The project was initially going to be anonymous for those young people, and as we worked with with those people, it was it was being led by them. So we're continually asking questions, Do you want your story to be anonymous? Do you want your name to be in the augmented reality? Do you want it to be on the exhibition panel? Some people wanted their first name. Some people wanted their full name. Some people wanted to front media and talk about it more and wanted to know what opportunities there were to share their story much more broadly.

Scotia: What a great outcome in terms of youth leadership in presenting, escalating that into more of a public conversation.

Megan: I think once going through the process of finding their voice and story, it really shifted into a place of seeing how that could impact other people around them and how many people associated with with the story and and could really see themselves as as people who could stand up and say, no, this is important. What happened to me is important. What happened to our community is important. And I want to tell you about it.

Scotia: We will share links to the project and some video work of the show, in our show notes so people can get a bit of a sense of the visuals. But for our podcast listeners, could you describe for us what the immersive experience of the finished work was like? So if I was walking into the gallery, what would I experience and how would I engage with that work?

Megan: So as you walk up to the gallery, you'd be approached by one of our staff members who would talk you through the use of an iPad, which is how you experience it. You put headphones on, walk into the gallery, which is effectively empty other than some shards of vinyl, which shows some of the fallen tree environments. On the screen on the iPad you can select from two different ways to engage. One is a series of five stories in space, and one is a couple of longer narratives that were evolving stories. Generally, we encourage people to start with the five stories in one space and then select that on the

iPad, walk up to a narrative bubble, which they virtually put the iPad into, and you would start to hear that young person tell the story as you walk around and can see in that virtually in the space through the iPad, the objects that they are talking about and some of those objects were - Jess had a chainsaw. So just talking a lot about the sound of chainsaws four weeks after the experience. Damian's was a fridge which had his insulin in it, and there was there was power out for about three weeks. So his story is about being diabetic and and not having the ability to look after his medications properly. There was an outdoor antenna. There was a fireplace that the family used to keep warm outdoors. There's some of the examples of what's in those five smaller stories as you walk around the space. And the two longer narratives were two much more in depth stories. So one was Claudia's story that Volker was mentioning earlier with the staircase, and that story evolves over time. And the other story was Willow's, which was of her house…a tree fell on her house and she was saved because the tree hit the fridge. And you can see in as the story evolves, you can see and walk around that space and then it moves into the story of her father, who she had lost prior to the storms.

Scotia: Volker, the use of AR is getting more traction, particularly in cultural spaces. What do you think is the value or the power of that as a medium in these kind of spaces or in in that, obviously they're a storytelling tool, but what do you think is the value of them specifically in addressing these kind of very weighted important stories?

Volker: Mm. I think I mean, just the process of creating for, for collaborators, for the kids, but also for an audience, the audience point of view is just an engaging experience, something you might not have seen before, an experience in a museum and particular Hard Place / Good place at the museum for an interesting technical aspect, they just pick up the iPad, you walk into the space and things appear inside the gallery. But it's also, I think, interesting for an audience. It's not a like a virtual reality experience where you you're on your own, but you're in the space in the gallery with multiple people. And on the iPad, you can see the other visitors the other members of your audience at the same time as the 3D objects which come in virtual. So you have these sort of interesting and sometimes uncanny moments where people interact with virtual elements in the same space, and it can be quite engaging, I think and sort of an interesting way of experiencing those stories.

Scotia: So much more sort of sensorial engagement in a complex.

Volker: And also sort of dynamic in a way. You move around, you can look at objects from different perspectives, point of view, and you can choose your own adventure if you want, at least for the visuals.

Scotia: The work was shown in the museum in Lilydale from September to November 2022. What was the feedback that you received from the community and did you find that the work provided space for others to also engage in a sharing or processing of their own experience, and was that an intent for you.

Megan: The responses were expected expectedly mixed. There were some people who, weren't able, didn't feel comfortable listening to those stories who had been deeply affected themselves. There were some people who listened to one or two and said, I don't want to do the more in-depth stories, I know they're more traumatic but I really, really appreciate the strength of these young people telling their stories. Some people who who weren't from the region, had no idea that this storm had happened and the impact that that had had on the community so that was eye opening. We do we get an equal mix of local

visitors and tourists coming to the museum. So it was really sharing that difficult experience, you know, outside of what was a very isolated area because the storm hit about a 20 kilometre radius really heavily and of course in a huge region. People living half an hour away didn't know about it, let alone people visiting from Melbourne. We did provide visitors the opportunity to give feedback and we we decided to ask them to give feedback directly to the young people in that opportunity. So we had all these beautiful handwritten shards we called them, where people had written notes to thank and reflect and respond to the young people in the stories that they had shared, which ended up on the outside of the gallery. And some of those were really profound. So there was people coming in who weren't able to articulate what had happened to them, but found that these stories had given voice to their own experiences and feelings. But mostly it was a sense of gratitude towards the young people in sharing what had happened. A lot of our council staff were deeply moved by that. A lot of the most of the staff across council were involved in the recovery effort in some way. So being able to hear those young people's voices, it really shifted how the team felt about the impact of their own work on a daily basis. They might be clearing roads or making sure planning permits get through, but the impact of that on those young people's lives is huge.

Scotia: Mmm yeah the interconnection that we can so easily slip over. So a question to you both, really, what do you think the impact was on the participants, both from the process of engagement and also sitting in those beautiful responses? Do you have a sense of how the process affected them or how it kind of fed into them and their community around them?

Megan: I think it was quite varied depending on the experience of the of the young person. Willow, who had one of the longer narratives, had this beautiful quote that she said in an Age interview because she did end up doing interviews in The Age and went went on Radio National with Virginia Trioli as well to tell part of her story. But she said, I didn't realise how much I needed my story to be heard. That's when I started to accept that this happened. It took away the storm's power. So for her, it was an incredible process of being able to voice that was what had happened. And it's led to a number of other things for Willow, such as she won the Council's Australia Day Award for Young Person of the Year as part of this. This project was part of that award and she's also gone on to feel really strongly about engaging in a creative career after the experience as well. And we received similar feedback from some of the others. One of the other participants was thinking about pursuing social work, but through this process really felt much more strongly drawn to that as a career. And there was other participants who found it an enjoyable experience and that was that was great and off they go, you know, off they go to do other things. So, you know, the different different depths of engagement, I guess, in the storytelling.

Scotia: Always the case isn't it? And Volker you would have seen that in terms of the level of engagement, particularly when you talked earlier about skill, skill sharing or skill development. And as much as there is a process of telling the story, the kind of framing and understanding the language of the creative arts, but also its capacity to be able to intersect and kind of escalate issues or ideas or things like that. That's a great power of these immersive programs, isn't it?

Volker: Mm hmm. Yeah. And also probably to rethink on a personal level what was actually the impact of the storm? You know, to to analyse what happened to me and why did it happen to me? And I think just the process of telling the story and developing the story over a couple of weeks helped them to process the events obviously, then the technical side of things is just another sort of step, another level on, on the processing of

what happened to them. And yeah, for most of the young people I think it was also interesting to experience how the technology works. And then at a later stage we sort of kept them involved while we developed the application for the iPad to some degree. But then in the opening night they all came they all joined us for the opening and first time they saw the experience in the gallery. And, and we received a lot of good feedback from from the young people also informing maybe future projects how we could approach that even better. But it was interesting observing them while they sort of experienced their own story in this three dimensional sort of environment in the gallery.

Scotia: Yeah. Such a different way of mirroring your own presence, isn't it? It strikes me as a kind of project that has enormous potential to continue in other locations where you've kind of met your framework of how you develop these ideas. What's for you, what is the future of that work and how do you plan to continue it, or how do you see it as a kind of more meshed community framework for people to engage with?

Volker: Yeah, the framework is in place and originally we wanted to work because we did work as a community also in New South Wales, western New South Wales, in Warwick, and tried to develop a couple of stories with the community there in Warwick there's a high youth suicide. So it's a big problem out there and we started to work with a couple of people out there, but it never came to a point where we said we have now a collection of stories that you can publish or bring into a into a piece, into a sort of augmented reality app. You didn't have the context for those stories yet to truly show them. But the Yarra Ranges Storm Recovery project was great because it just gave us also the context to try out this form of storytelling. The first time really for a public exhibition. So for us it was as a research lab, it was a fantastic opportunity to work with the kids and the Yarra Ranges Museum and Council to explore those interactive and spatial narratives. And it led to sort of a format which you can apply to to other contexts.

Megan: I think there was something really special in being able to work on this from a curatorial perspective as well. As a museum, we had never worked with augmented reality and that form of storytelling before, but we often work with oral histories, for instance. So this process, there was so many crossover skills with curating a lived experience project and in curating something that might be more of a memory based oral history project. But being able to do that in a in a contemporary way so that the outcome that we're providing is working with the current issues of our community was quite an amazing process for the museum team to go through. And one of the things that we learned that I hold on to with this project is the idea of second stage recovery and the idea of meaning-making and storytelling as that second stage of recovery. Which is something that we learned from that early psychosocial risk analysis conversation that we had was to make sure that we're very clear of the space that we're working in. We're not we're not looking for people to share their trauma. This is not necessarily a therapeutic project in that way. This is a meaning making project so we can help those people who are ready to make meaning and and and share their stories with the wider community. And that's been a really important, important distinction that the project held on to and I think is part of its success is that that idea of meaning-making as second stage recovery. And it's something that we talk about a lot from a curatorial perspective when we're working in this space.

Scotia: That's a lovely way of framing it. Megan, Because there's, you know, there's a small, fragile line between the idea of a story and a story that's used in a voyeuristic sense for public public showing and I think, you know, maybe the way that you're framing that really ensures that that doesn't occur, that there's a duty of care around not only the story but the audiences and how that's framed for audiences. I'd love to hear your thoughts

about the role of the institutions like regional galleries in disaster recovery, because we're really trying to grow the understanding of your spaces as being real frontlines for community recovery programs and processes and the Yarra Ranges Regional Museum as part of a local council. And we're seeing, especially in regional rural areas, that councils and institutions such as yours are being caught on more and more frequently to support the communities through these disasters and other challenges that they're seeing themselves as… in research at the moment, they're talking about cultural spaces as being places for disaster preparedness and mitigation because that's where people make connections and connections are the greatest strength for a community in a disaster context. I think all of us here and many of the listeners are aware of the value of Arts to support communities in this way but I'm interested to hear from you how you see this role developing and what do you think it's needed in terms of supporting through policy or structures to enable institutions to meet this challenge and continue this kind of community engagement work?

Megan: I think it's something that arts and cultural spaces have always done, whether it's been clearly articulated as the objective is a different is a different thing. They do it in so many different ways. Some of our cultural spaces were turned into actual disaster hubs where people could could come in and plug their phones in and use the bathrooms and all sorts of things during some of those experiences. But I think we do need more policies and guidelines around how cultural institutions can work in that space. And I personally take a lot of inspiration from the work that's happening in the US and the UK at the moment. There's some really amazing arts health guidelines and structures that can help support not just the the communities that we're working with in that space, but also the workers themselves. There's there's a whole other level of there's a whole other skill set required that people need to train in, in order to work, in particular in the kind of lived experience space. So I think one thing we can do is to identify that that actually is a separate skill set that we can train and upskill in and become more capable in. From a local government perspective, one of the reasons I think working for a local government institution is fantastic is because we can draw on the other skills and expertise that are across the organisation. As I mentioned before, this project came from a collaboration with our recovery directorate, where we had social workers and other people who were working on the ground. Without that kind of direct access to collaborate with people who have that expertise, a project like this just just wouldn't have happened or it wouldn't have happened in the kind of caring and held and impactful way that this one did. So I think that's local government institutions in particular can play a really key role there. But I do also think there's space for well there's need for the broader policy and guidance work that, you know, that is kind of behind the eight ball a bit in Australia at the moment but the work the work that your doing with creative recovery network is, is going a long way to guide that and the expertise that we really need to work in that space.

Scotia: Thanks, Megan. That's really great to hear that. And I think there is there's just so, so much great work happening. It's just giving it a bit of a context and such a vital need for those interrelationships that are required to ensure that we are doing no harm in the process of the development of our work.

So anything either of you would like to say before we finish up our chat, anything that you took away or learnt from the experience?

Megan: I'd like to add one other thing which is that one of the really interesting outcomes for us as a museum is that we have decided to acquire these stories into our collection. So one of the added outcomes, I guess is bringing lived experience storytelling into our active

and contemporary collecting program, which is not something we've ever done before. Normally, museums focus on collecting oral histories, particularly of people who we might be at risk of losing. So, drawing on their historical knowledge, but it's been a real shift to capture those stories and to have them as part of the museum's collection to capture a moment in time and a particular event that's happened in our community. And that's something I think we'll do more of in future.

Volker: We haven't really talked about it yet, but to to reach a sort of a wider audience outside the museum, it would also be possible to publish the experience as an app in the App Store. I don't think we have talked to the young people yet if that is an option for them, if they are willing to share the story sort of publicly, but I think it would be also interesting to create a collection of stories and publish them to the App Store for everyone else to experience it outside the museum context.

Scotia: Yeah, it'll be interesting to know how that then shifts, the framing of the work because the museum context is so vital in terms of how it was structured and how it was kind of cared for as you spoke.

Volker: And you need to create that context and within the app with depth of some sort and have a good introduction.

Megan: So one of the things I learned and took away from this project was just that the participant experience is everything in designing a project like this. I think often we can get caught up in you know, a desired outcome and doing good through storytelling and lived experience storytelling. But I think one thing we did really well on this project was to centre the participant experience and allow the whole project to be guided by those participants. And it did, as I mentioned earlier, that did change the parameters, did change as we were guided by those young people. And those young people are part of our community and now have an ongoing relationship with us at the Museum and Council. In fact, this last week was the second anniversary of the storms. So we've been in touch and following up and encouraging those young people to partake in further creative recovery projects that are happening within the region. So it's really essential when we're doing this work to make sure that their experiences are everything and that we're building relationships as part of that that are ongoing. And I think that's a really critical component of that duty of care. This isn't a project with a start and an end. It's the building of a relationship which can then flourish from there and hopefully can be a safe place and platform as a cultural space for those young people in their friends and families from here on as well.

Scotia: Mmm, beautiful. Thank you. Thank you Volker and thank you, Megan, for such great reflections on this wonderful project. And yeah, we will look forward to seeing what else comes out from your amazing gallery there Megan and your work Volker, I've been following a little of the work in Warwick as well so great to see these new ways of engaging and deepening our practice.

Scotia: Thanks for joining me for Creative Responders in Conversation, a podcast from the Creative Recovery Network.

We'll link to Hard Place / Good Place in the show notes and you can also find the project in our recently refreshed library of case studies - alongside many others relating to children and young people - on our website. You can find us at www dot creative recovery dot net dot au.

That’s also where you can find our latest news, resources and all of our past podcasts and transcripts for each episode.

If you’re interested in hearing more about the role of young people in disaster recovery, the very first episode of our podcast explores Strathewen Primary School’s child-led bushfire education program and includes perspectives from a range of experts in that field.
Head back to season 1 episode 1 if you’d like to hear that.

This podcast is produced by me and my Creative Recovery Network colleague, Jill Robson. Our sound engineer is Tiffany Dimmack and the Creative Responders theme is composed by Mikey Squire.

Thanks for listening.