

Media Release

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CANBERRANS IMPACTED BY DRUGS EXPRESS THEMSELVES THROUGH ART

Directions Health Service held an exhibition yesterday of artworks created by Canberrans seeking to transform their lives for the better.

“Expressive therapies, sometimes called creative therapies or art-based treatment, offer a complementary or alternative approach to traditional therapies for treatment of substance dependence,” Directions Health Services CEO, Bronwyn Hendry explained.

“Research into the benefits of art therapy for people seeking treatment for drug or alcohol dependence suggests that participants experience a reduction in denial and shame; a reduction in resistance to treatment; and an increased capacity for communication and reflection, leading to an increased motivation to embrace change.”

Led by Robyn Davis, a registered and qualified art therapist and counsellor, with a Master of Arts in Counselling, a Masters in Arts Practice (Art Therapy) and more than twenty years’ experience, Direction’s therapeutic art program allows clients to expressively explore and reflect upon their lives, their choices and their pathways to change.

“Today we were honoured to have our clients share their moving artwork with us. Each piece of art reflects an individual’s journey and own story, it is very personal,” Ms Hendry said.

Directions Health Services’ art therapy program includes therapeutic drawing, collage, mindfulness and process painting. The program is based upon the premise that the therapeutic processes involved in creative self-expression assist people to access their emotions, achieve insight, manage behaviour, resolve conflicts, reduce stress, develop interpersonal skills and increase self-esteem.

“Drug dependence is a complex health issue that affects the lives of many people in our community, including family and friends,” Ms Hendry said. “There is no universal treatment method that meets everyone’s needs. We need to provide a range of treatment and support services that can be adapted to meet each individual’s unique requirements. Directions Health utilises a variety of approaches, incorporating traditional psychosocial treatments, complemented by alternative, expressive therapies.”

One of Direction’s expressive therapy participants, Susan, reflected on her experience in this program: “The story of recovery is long and difficult for the person and for those who love them. For many, it is a story of shame, grief and loss. Loss of opportunities, lost time, loss of respect of others and self, and loss of physical and mental well-being. In order to heal, all of these things need to be discovered, examined, honoured and accepted”.

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“Our art therapy sessions provide a way to express what is difficult, to reflect and to tell our own stories. Our groups are mindful and creative, and become little communities of trust, where we share our work and stories, and support one another, with Robyn’s gentle guidance”.

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