Young people, creative participation and crisis recovery

This Issues Paper examines the use of creative arts as a participation strategy to engage young people in practices that support mental health and wellbeing. In wake of COVID-19 and concurrent crises the Resonant Voices research project, an arts-based participatory action research project, demonstrated the important role that creativity and artistic media play in individual and collective recovery for young people.

This Issues Paper provides background and context for the project and offers recommendations for government, organisations and local communities on supporting engagement and amplifying the voice of young people in recovering from public health or other significant disasters.

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Table of Contents

Young people aged 18 to 30 have often been considered the future-makers, those with the hope and energy to carry society to a better place, whilst simultaneously being positioned as 'incomplete adults' and 'citizens in waiting,' (Weller, 2007 in Wood, 2017). Bringing together evidence from the literature on young people's mental health and the challenges of co-design as a participation strategy, this paper outlines key considerations for policy and practice that centre young people's recovery through creative community arts approaches.

In this paper we report on the findings from Resonant Voices, an arts-based participatory action research project engaging 9 young people over 9 months through creative knowledge translation and generation, which aimed to:

- Co-create an arts-based participatory action research collective that builds connections and community, and develops creative knowledges for and by young people.

- Co-create and curate creative knowledge events on a variety of platforms, including Instagram, a public exhibition and a zine, to bring the themes and stories to a broad youth audience in order to inform and inspire them.

- Develop a short series of transmedia stories that allow for a deeper dialogue about social justice issues and social change topics as identified in previous research and in the workshops undertaken for this project.

In line with the aims of this research, the findings are presented in the form of a zine featuring the artist's work which connects the themes and reflects on the project experience.

The Resonant Voices Zine.
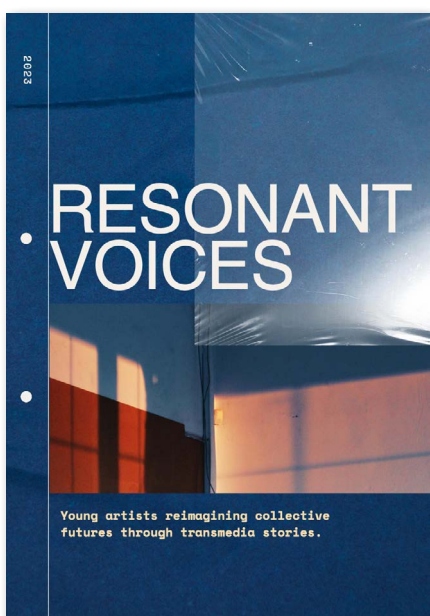
The Resonant Voices project highlights the importance of creating supportive and collaborative long-term strategies of engagement and knowledge co-production with young people, particularly as part of disaster recovery. The use of creative arts and storytelling was found to be a powerful method to empower communities whose voices have been historically co-opted and oppressed. Finally, combining community building and the creative arts holds promise as an approach to working through traumatic experiences and improving wellbeing.

Key recommendations are:

1. **Prioritise and invest in** participatory programs and consultative processes that empower young people through tailored capacity building to:

    a. Develop new skills in creative arts mediums and ethical community engagement.

    b. Foster critical thinking and reflection.

    c. Connect to community-based organisations and local mentors.

2. **Invest** in creative arts programs that value creating social connection and a social change focus as part of the individual and collective non-clinical mental health response during and after disaster. This recommendation speaks to:

    a. Building stronger relationships with young people that are long term and build trust.

    b. A focus on relationships and building trust in order to create a safe and caring space.

3. **Invest** in youth-led social change initiatives that facilitate creative and flexible engagement among young people.

    a. Young people choose the issues, creative mediums, and community engagement strategies.

    b. Modes of engagement and time frames for program delivery are flexible.

Young people have experienced concurrent crises, with severe health and economic impacts

Young people in our society today are facing a world of growing complexity, change and uncertainty as they navigate the transition into adulthood. In Australia. Young people have both witnessed and experienced catastrophic climate events (fires, droughts and floods), in addition to the COVID-19 pandemic which exposed and amplified inequality and discrimination, and led to anti-lockdown and anti-vaccination protests and the rise of far right groups (Campion & Poynting, 2021).

Amongst young people in Australia, certain groups felt the impacts of these cascading crises more acutely. For example, young people and women in insecure, casual and 'gig' employment were not provided with adequate financial support during the pandemic, resulting in increased levels of stress and vulnerability (Churchill, 2021; O'Keeffe, 2022). A recent study by Mission Australia and Orygen (see Filia et al., 2022) used cluster analysis to examine the impacts of the pandemic on different groups of young people across a number of life domains including participation in activities, education, employment, family, financial security, friendships, housing and mental health. Their findings identified the following groups of young people as experiencing more negative impacts in comparison to their peers:

- gender diverse young people
- those with a disability
- living in out-of-home care
- students
- young carers
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth
- those who had reported poor mental health.

Young people in Melbourne in particular endured six lockdowns across 2020 and 2021, amounting to 262 days in restrictive isolation. Current Australian and international literature has emerged examining the ways in which lockdowns have negatively impacted young people in terms of their mental health and wellbeing as a result of isolation and confinement (McKinlay et al., 2022). Schippers (2020) has reported that isolation measures of more than ten days can lead to post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), anxiety and depression. The Mission Australia Youth Survey in 2022 (see Leung et al., 2022) surveyed a younger cohort of Victorians (aged 15 to 19 years) who rated the following as personal challenges related to their mental health:

- 27% suffered from mental health issues including low mental health, stress, anxiety, depression, low self-esteem or self-harm
- 22% felt lonely all or most of the time
- 45% were extremely or very concerned about coping with stress.

Thus, COVID-19 has had an unprecedented impact on the daily lives of young people, with some arguing that there will be a 'scarring' effect that will linger, shaping identity, relationships, education, career and life trajectories (Sonuga-Barke & Fearon, 2021). In the wake of the COVID-19 crisis we are seeing some of the consequences of extended lockdowns for young Victorians, particularly in the economic downturn and recession which have created a housing and rental crisis alongside the rising cost of living. Taken together, we are getting a clear picture of how these intersecting crises form an experience of collective trauma for young people, which Watkins and Shulman (2008) note:

> The key characteristic of traumatogenic events, whether a sudden shocking disaster or a slow insidious development, is that they bring about a calamitous emotional rupture in our sense of self-identity and community, disconnecting us from the ways of thinking, speaking, acting, and relating through which we previously made sense of the world. (p.106)

Importantly longitudinal and community-based research studies have shown that the majority of children and young people recover from disasters with the support of family, friends, school supports and community (Harms et al., 2021; Peek, 2008). However, evidence-based research and reviews (see Hobfoll et al., 2007 and Gibbs et al., 2021) have noted that prevention and interventions programs aimed at facilitating psychosocial recovery in the context of disasters require targeted support principles including: 1) a sense of safety, 2) calming, 3) a sense of self and community efficacy, 4) connectedness, and 5) hope.

The impacts of COVID-19 have exacerbated long standing service failures

It is important to realise however that experiences of individual and collective trauma did not just begin with the onset of the pandemic, nor will the trauma necessarily subside in the post-COVID recovery phase. The systems, frameworks, ideologies and approaches for addressing 'recovery' in the wake of wide-scale crises and the ongoing racism, violence and inequality experienced by women and LGBTQIA+ are in need of repair and reimagining (Bowman, 2019; Cuervo et al., 2023).

Recent reports have identified issues with the current mental health system's response: long wait times for mental health providers, difficulties with access to GPs and mental health providers (particularly for under-resourced young people, and those in rural/regional areas), unaffordable care, lack of early intervention and non-clinical supports in community-based settings, gaps in training for peers and others that work with young people (Cuervo et al., 2023; Youth Action, 2022).

Co-design with young people as a strategy for recovery: possibilities and pitfalls

Over the last decade we have seen a shift and turn to a participatory role for young people, a move in government policy and practice in the service sector more broadly which has involved young people in shaping society, institutions and services. Farthing (2012) describes youth participation as "a process where young people, as active citizens, take part in, express views on, and have decision making power about issues that affect them" (p. 73). Within this framework, young people are positioned as a bridge between the present and the future (Lee, 2013), responsible for either remaking society and overcoming legacies that have led to environmental degradation and deep social inequality or upholding and reproducing society in its current state. Yet, as has been noted in several studies, to have young people participating in social change and seeking to solve complex problems necessarily involves them challenging and critiquing current systems, and this has the potential to become a violent burden if they are ridiculed, denied access to resources and opportunities or are tokenised (Ryalls & Mazzarella, 2021; Clay & Turner, 2021).

Governments, NGOs and other service agencies have been using co-design with young people and other community groups as a participatory mechanism to shape policy, service design and service delivery. Co-design is a participatory and collaborative process in which 'service users' or those with lived experience contribute to understandings of health and social issues, facilitate the creation of solutions to complex issues and provide feedback and innovation (Blomkamp, 2016). It has been important in generating improvements to mental health services for young people in Australia (O'Brien et al., 2021; Blanchard & Fava, 2017).

The role for young people's participation in community recovery from disasters has been well documented, revealing the importance of youth-friendly spaces, practices and opportunities to voice concerns, articulate needs and contribute to frameworks and action for community recovery (McDonald et al., 2023; McCarty et al., 2022; Cox et al., 2017; Fletcher et al., 2016; Plush & Cox, 2019).

Similarly, international, national and state government bodies and organisations have been creating frameworks and policies that ensure the use of participatory and co-design approaches for improving strategies and services for young people in the context of disaster recovery. These frameworks are detailed on page 6.

Frameworks for Youth Participation and Recovery

United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction (UNISDR), Words into Action guide on Engaging Children and Youth in Disaster Risk and Reduction and Resilience Building

The Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction 2015-2030 has a guide for engaging children and youth in disaster risk reduction and resilience building that leverages their unique perspectives, knowledge and capacities. One element of the framework emphasises and provides resources on meaningful and empowering youth engagement strategies which (1) create safe spaces (2) use age-appropriate communication, and (3) ensure active participation. Develop children and young peoples' capacities, including knowledge about disaster recovery and resilience and approaches to action are also emphasised in this framework. This framework also outlines the importance of young people in *decision-making* linked to disaster recovery and preparedness, developing and supporting *youth networks* that can share critical information, promote collaboration and collective action.

Victorian Government Youth Strategy 2022 - 2027

Recommendation 4 states that "Young people are respected and involved in decisions in their communities", which includes creating more opportunities to work together with young people across systems change, policy reform, service design, roll out and evaluation.

Royal Commission into Victoria's Mental Health System, Final Report, 2021

The report has a strong focus on co-design, lived experience and centring the involvement of young people in the creation and leadership of a new mental health system.

It details the significant value of co-designing together with young people: "to establish the youth mental health and wellbeing service stream will require an ambitious program of reform… importantly, these reforms must be implemented through co-design with young people and their families, carers and supporters" (State of Victoria, 2021, p. 203).

Youth Health Research and Policy Priorities and Concerns, Wellbeing Health & Youth Centre of Research Excellence, 2021

A commission of diverse young people in Western Sydney identified key youth health concerns during the COVID-19 pandemic through co-design and co-research (Nguyen 2022).

The commission calls for the creation of formal dedicawted spaces to facilitate increased involvement between young people and researchers and policy-makers whose work affects the wellbeing of young people.

It furthermore highlights that current health services aren't operating effectively and don't accurately represent the actual needs of young people who were disproportionately affected by the pandemic as policies, research and services are created by adults rather than young people.

However, more creative and diversified forms of youth engagement and youth-led action models are needed, due to the current limitations and top-down nature of current youth participation and co-design models within governments, NGOs and other services. Local research (Baker & Ali, 2022) mapping the social justice concerns of young people in Victoria finds that co-design can often be coercive and performative rather than moving towards genuine collaboration by excluding certain groups of young people, specifically First Nations young people, and prioritising the voices of those who will uphold narrow institutional agendas. Similarly Khan (2022) demonstrates that through extractive institutional conditions, many youth programs and organisations often seek to exclude or manage certain voices of young people from marginalised backgrounds through restrictive top-down frameworks of inspiration and representation. Khan thus proposes the importance of facilitating alternative spaces that are meaningfully led by young people so as to prioritise a strategy of critical reflection, collaboration, knowledge co-production and creative leadership.

Creative arts for wellbeing and community building

The use of creative and art-based approaches with young people for individual and community recovery from disasters is important in opening up spaces for youth voice and agency, and for strengthening wellbeing through community building (Plush & Cox, 2019; Fletcher et al., 2016; Fletcher et al., 2016). Research mobilising participatory methodologies such as photovoice during the COVID-19 pandemic has provided critical insights into young people's lived experiences of disaster and contributed to recovery frameworks and calls to action (Pickering et al., 2022). Research on creative arts therapy with individuals and groups have shown to have healing effects by facilitating; (1) the sharing experience through storytelling and symbolic representations, (2) critical reflection and empathy, and (3) reconciliation among community members (Kapitan, 2011; McNiff, 2004).

In Australia, a growing range of organisations and programs are using creative arts to empower social change among young people. Creative arts initiatives have served a crucial function in creating relational spaces of community building and reimagining the future in working towards social change, which has in turn positive impacts in both mental health and social cohesion (MacNeil et al., 2018). Some local Victorian programs are focusing on the power of the creative arts to raise awareness and change community attitudes on topics such as gender equity (Shearson et al., 2022). Other initiatives, such as the Future Reset program led by VicHealth, are building multi-sectoral partnerships to create youth-led, community-based arts projects in metropolitan and regional Victoria to respond to the intensifying inequality and the mental health crisis that have followed on in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. The Future Reset program is part of an emerging range of public health initiatives which aim to increase wellbeing and social connectedness through community-based arts projects.
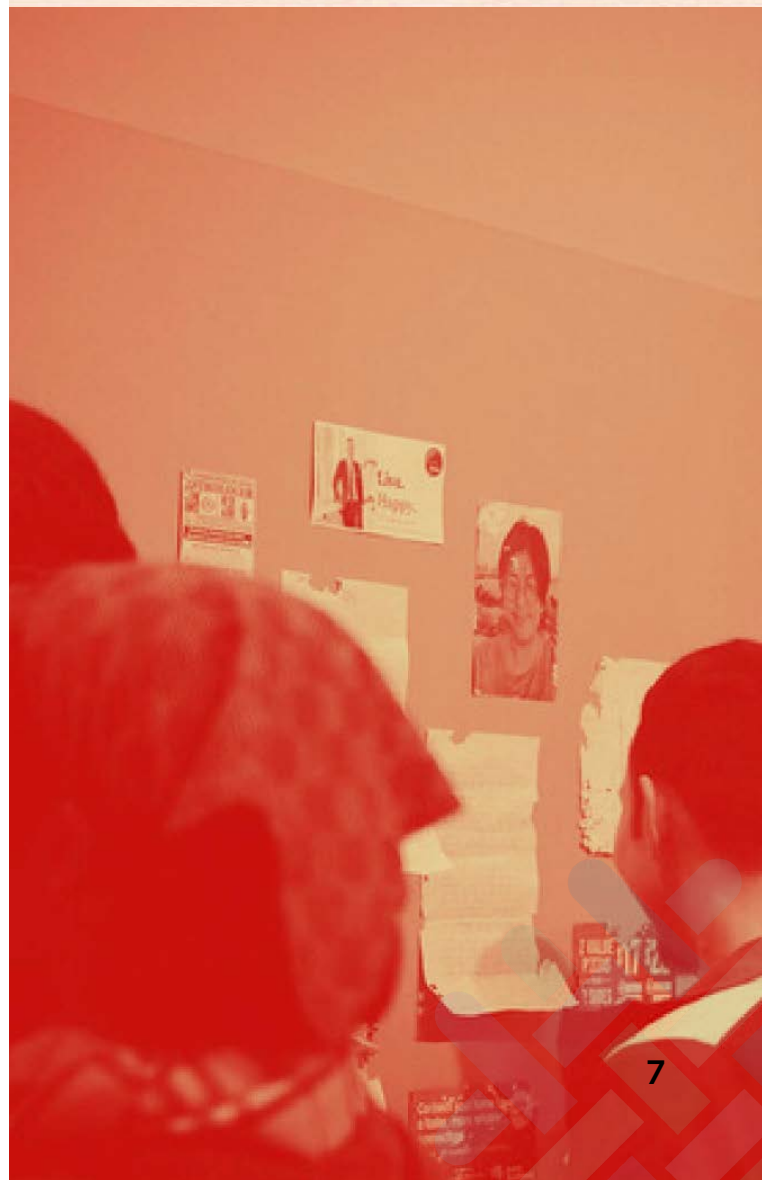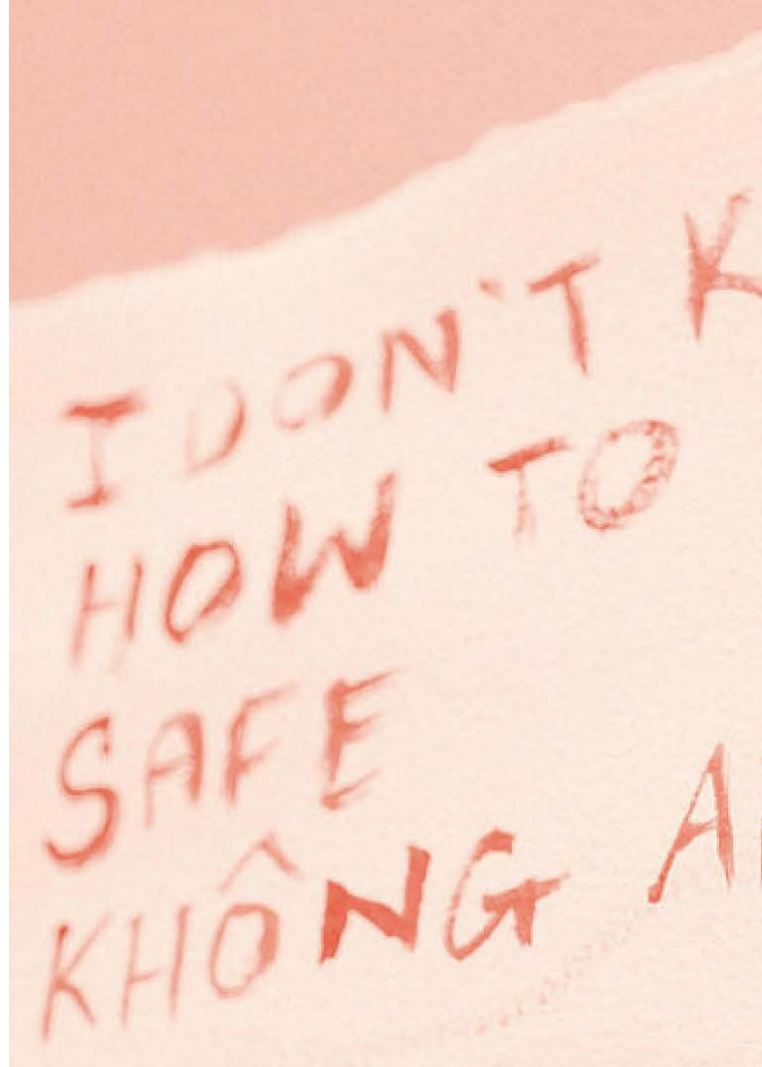
Resonant Voices is an arts-based youth participatory project that forms part of a broader project called *Building Solidarities with Youth People through Activist Creative Knowledges* that focuses on co-creating non-traditional knowledges together with young people through community-engaged arts (i.e., arts, community events and digital platforms) about social justice issues and navigating our current social and political context.

The Resonant Voices program was imagined and created in the wake of two other youth-activist applied research projects (2020-2022) that explored young people's issues of concern, experiences of voice, participation and activism. This local research (Baker & Ali, 2022) highlighted the fatigue and frustration experienced by young people from both the pandemic and concurrent crises, and also the challenges of creating change through participation in organisations and institutions. This research also showed that young people were looking for places to connect, build community, be vulnerable and make sense of the complex world around them. This is particularly important for young people from marginalised backgrounds experiencing heightened impacts from global crises, whose voices can otherwise be exploited, silenced or ignored. The young peoples' desire to 'slow down', to create community and mobilise creativity that draws on their values and visions, was central in the creation of Resonant Voices.

## Arts-based youth participatory research using transmedia storytelling

Children and young people are not often as readily believed, heard or taken seriously, and face challenges to their capacities as knowers and as creators of knowledge (Baumtrog & Peach, 2019; Carel & Györffy, 2014). Arts-based, creative and cultural practices have more recently been recognised not only as a powerful way to increase knowledge and understanding of social issues, but also as a means to work alongside young people in creating new knowledges for social change (Goessling & Wagner, 2021; Sonn & Baker, 2016; Baker, 2019). Research that uses the arts as a method of investigation and change in youth settings has also proved useful in creating activist capacities such as a sense of social justice and agency, and in fostering intercultural dialogue (Bell & Desai, 2011; Sonn & Baker, 2018). In Resonant Voices, transmedia storytelling was the arts approach used, chosen for its depth and complexity in bringing together experience and narrative.

Transmedia storytelling utilises diverse platforms and media types to tell a story across interconnected forms of media. The story is fragmented into various elements which complement each other, creating a more nuanced and immersive experience. With multiple entry points into lived experience, transmedia storytelling is a powerful way to create resonance within and across experience, identity/ies and issues of concern.

The artists in Resonant Voices

The artists in Resonant Voices brought a range of identities, experiences and arts expertise to the project which are outlined below.

Lived experience and identity of the young artists	Arts mediums
• Queer and gender diverse • Disabled, neurodiverse and mental illness • Refugee/migrant background • Person of colour • Family violence • Homelessness and housing insecurity • Sexual abuse	• Music and song writing • Writing and poetry • Physical installation • Video • Photography • Collage • Painting
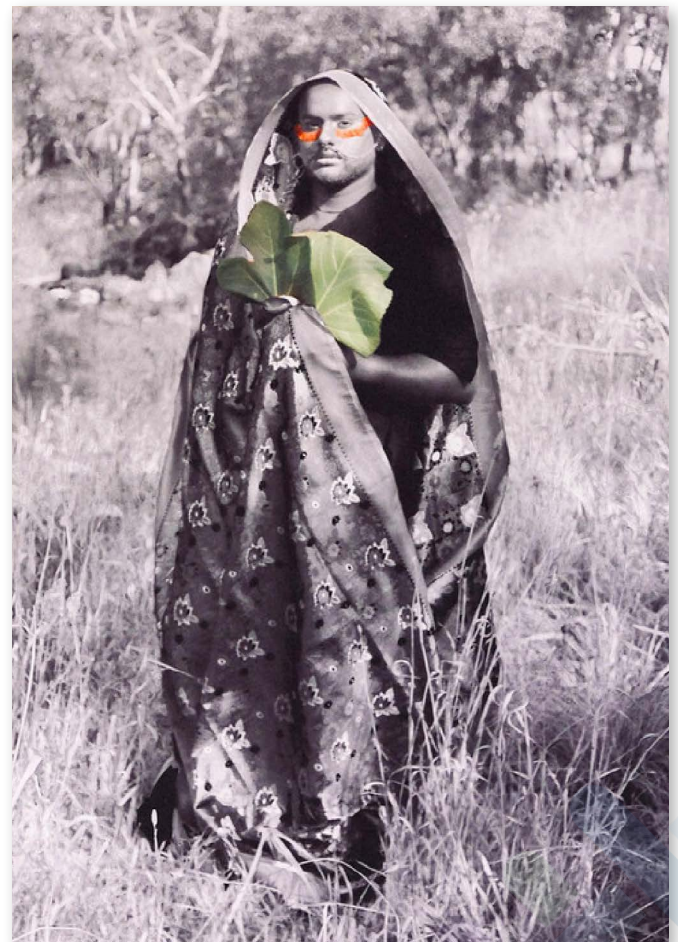
Workshops for making artmaking and community building

Resonant Voices supported 9 young artists over 9 months to develop their creative storytelling skills, build community and create a network of support through a series of 5 workshops, supplemented by mentoring and individually tailored support. A number of community arts organisations and individual artists were engaged in support of the program: Nyayoud Jice, Xen Nha, Madz Rehorek, Ying Ang, Little Projector Company, Le Space Gallery, the Centre for Contemporary Photography and Creative Brimbank.

- Workshop topics:
    - Introduction to storytelling
    - Visual and transmedia storytelling
    - Sound storytelling
    - Ethical representation for community-based research and documentary arts
    - Storyboarding and drop in support
- Individually tailored support:
    - Inspiration letters with tailored creative storyboarding prompts, moodboards, resources and written feedback
    - Inspiration letters with tailored creative storyboarding prompts, moodboards, resources and written feedback
    - Individual catch ups, production meetings and check ins

Data collection

Data gathering for this research project included workshop artefacts and notes taken during these sessions, the pieces of art created by the participants, reflections gathered via open-ended questionnaires, feedback on the graffiti wall at the exhibition and short interviews with the Resonant Voices participants.

Creative knowledge events and outputs

Peer reviewed publications, lengthy reports and seminars are often not easily accessible nor the best form to engage widely with different groups, particularly with young people. Arts-based approaches can be useful for communicating or 'translating' research findings by providing an emotive and visceral representation of the experiences and stories that are at the heart of social inquiry. One of the main aims of Resonant Voices was to co-produce creative knowledge with young people and bring those stories to the communities they belong to. This was accomplished through the following activities:

Exhibition

The Resonant Voices projection night exhibition took place in May 2023 at Le Space and showed a glimpse into the world as seen, heard and felt by the 9 artists participating in the project. Stories of grief, nature, healing, resistance and reimagining were presented to create a constellation of creative ideas in the night sky that illuminate new ways of being together, and of navigating our collective path forward. The event was attended by over 80 community members.


Instagram

Resonant Voices' Instagram showcases the ideas, themes and artwork of the young artists that formed part of the collective for this project. This platform aims to speak to young people about the different processes and themes that have arisen in the work - community building, artistic process, hope, healing, systemic inequality, and trauma.

Resonant Voices Instagram

Zine
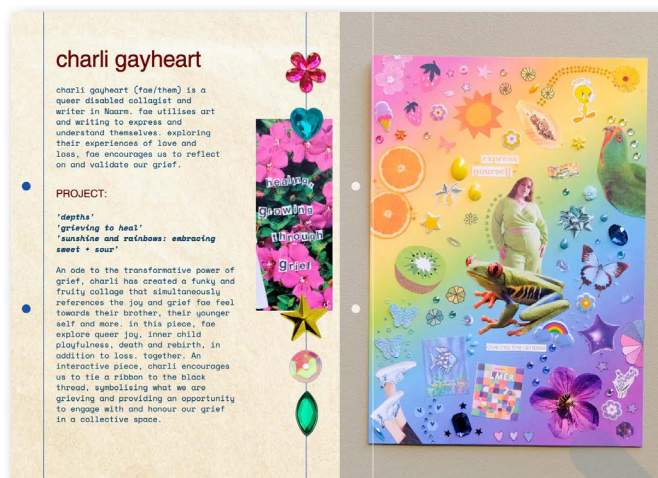
The Resonant Voices zine brings together the stories of each young artist, their work and delves into the aims of the arts-based participatory research project. It showcases the exhibition (projection) that was held for the community and is available on:

The Resonant Voices Zine.

Resonant Voices:
Key Learnings and Reflections

Key learnings and priorities
from young people's transmedia stories

KEY PRIORITY	SHORT DESCRIPTION	REFER TO THE WORK OF
The importance of moving with and honouring trauma, grief and mental health	Experiences of trauma and grief were themes across the artists' work and personal journeys - the loss of a close friend or family member, aspects of self/identity that shift and change during young adulthood, traumatic childhood experiences, damage to the environment and the impacts of systemic inequality. Woven into these stories was the idea that we don't simply move on from grief, we re-experience our past as part of our present. In addition, the works and the artists point to the power of grief as a transformative experience, a rebirth that needs collective spaces created through arts and community building to be honoured.	charli, Sylvia, Summi, Oscar, Lily, Liv
Questioning and resisting societal and institutional inequality	Many of the stories reflected the ways in which the participants' lives were impacted by systems and structures, including "techno capitalism," forms of discrimination and mistreatment on the basis of race, culture, ability, sexual orientation and gender identity, and experiences of violence. The artwork also spoke to how these capitalist systems have impacted nature and the environment.	Calev, Lily, Liv, Kirra
Reclaiming authorship of narratives	Many of the artists in this project had experiences of stigmatisation and/or victimisation. The transmedia stories demonstrated the ways participants made meaning of their lived experiences and were empowered to reclaim authorship of their narratives, identities and experiences.	Kirra, Lily, Summi
Collective healing, hope and joy	Participants felt the Resonant Voices project and their artworks created a vulnerable space for different people's stories to be witnessed and deeply listened to, in a move towards connection and collective approaches to healing. Despite the challenging experiences affecting the lives of young people, humour, joy and hope in the artworks and stories created an accessible way to imagine alternative futures and sustain collective social change together.	Liv, Summi, charli, Sylvia
Building relationships with nature to imagine new ways forward	Connecting and building relationships with nature to imagine a way forward were key messages in the stories, particularly in the context of the climate crisis as a major factor affecting the livelihood of young people.	Parminder, Calev, charli

Participant reflections on the Resonant Voices project

On the importance of participatory arts programs for connection and healing post COVID

"I think programs like this reach to the heart of issues and works at the level of people, and I feel like there's a massive lack of funding for them... this [program] would benefit a lot of people, and it would make art accessible and bring people what they were really missing during lockdown, which is healing other people, art, and embodiment." (Calev)

"To be honest, I loved all of it. I really came away from each session feeling so inspired, I felt a lot of lightness and excitement. I believe part of that stemmed from the feeling of being a part of something, feeling a part of community, or creative community.... It was such a caring, supportive, non-expectant, non-judgmental space – and that was a really consistent feeling I had through engaging in the program." (Liv)

"I think having community art spaces to engage with these experiences is so important, because art is such a powerful way of expressing, feeling, emotion, thought, idea in ways that you don't always appreciate from otherwise engaging in things in isolation." (Liv)

"I realize now [the project] is something that I have never had ever in my life. I've never had in my life where I connected with people in a certain way and we met up and had a lot of fun and ate lots of really good food and were really curious. I felt like we could talk on forever about all sorts of things, and it felt so generative and inspired and that was such a breath of fresh air for me [after COVID]" (Calev)

"And by creating art, I think it's a way to get people together and to almost bring light to these things...to increase awareness [about] mental health issues that are out there. Honestly, people are not alone. And if making art makes them feel good, then whether they should show it to the world, it's really up to them." (Lily)

On creative and arts-based approaches to research

"I think research, it can change other people's minds and it creates a ripple effect, for other things into the future. Whether we're going to live in your books as quotes or a picture... it's a very contemporary way of looking at research" (Lily)

Both the literature and the findings from this research have highlighted the importance of young people's genuine participation in the public health and emergency management community responses that are vital for disaster preparedness, response and recovery. Importantly, the literature and our findings show the need for local, nonclinical, and creative approaches to managing and processing traumatic experiences and building connections and creating ongoing support structures for young people. Similarly, initiatives that bring together participatory models of youth engagement and creative and arts as a form of expression are powerful ways of bringing young people's voices to a range of audiences.

Underpinning these recommendations is the need for those working alongside young people or making decisions about the opportunities and resources they have access to, to consider how to be responsive to the needs and experiences of specific groups.

The key recommendations are:

1. **Prioritise and invest in** participatory programs and consultative processes that empower young people through tailored capacity building to:

    a. Develop new skills in creative arts mediums and ethical community engagement.

    b. Foster critical thinking and reflection

    c. Connect to community-based organisations and local mentors.

2. **Invest** in creative arts programs that value creating social connection and a social change focus as part of the individual and collective non-clinical mental health response during and after disaster. This recommendation speaks to:

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    a. Young people choose the issues, creative mediums and community engagement strategies.

    b. Modes of engagement and time frames for program delivery are flexible.

Resource Bank

THE COMMONS
SOCIAL CHANGE LIBRARY

FUTURE RESET
(VicHealth and Partners)

ARTS GEN
(Supported by CoHealth)

BUILDING MOVEMENT
PROJECT / SOLIDARITY IS

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Authors

Alison Baker (she/her) is an Associate Professor in the Institute of Sustainable Industries and Liveable Cities at Victoria University. Her research focuses on identity, belonging and community building across a range of contexts. She mobilises creative and participatory research methodologies, specifically visual and sound storytelling, to explore and develop young people's sense of social justice and capacity for action.

Christopher Phung (he/him) is a healing-centred movement facilitator, artist and researcher. He has facilitated youth development programs and undertaken research at Victoria University, YACVIC, Orygen and the Melbourne Social Equity Institute. His creative practice and work aims to create cocoons of care that support people with lived experiences of structural injustice to creatively transform and reimagine their futures. His creative work and writing has been part of the West Writers program, Red Pocket Press and the Emerging Writers Festival.

Madz Rehorek (she/her) is a photographer, curator and producer based in Narrm/Melbourne, Australia. Coming from a family of Czech puppeteers, her work is often physical, messy and playful. She is a 3 time Moreland City Council grant recipient for her collaborative project, 'Atlas', which combines public photography, journalism and poetry installations in collaboration with community members across Melbourne's north. Her interest in contemporary visual storytelling began when she co-founded Ruffian Gallery, a home to socially aware photographers in Footscray, VIC (2012-2016) and curated photojournalism for #dysturb (NYC, Toronto, Paris, Bogotá, 2016-2019).

Artists

Calev is an artist living and working on the unceded lands of the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung and Bunurong peoples of the Kulin Nation. In a bold departure from their comics, illustration, and sculptural practice, Calev has entered the audiovisual field with their first transmedia work, Snail Mail, created in collaboration with a snail.

蓉 **Sylvia** is an emerging sound artist, based on unceded Wurundjeri and Boonwurrung lands. Her love of music was born in the bustling streets of her hometown, Singapore, before she moved to Naarm to immerse herself in new soundscapes. Through deep listening, Sylvia explores the sounds of the beings and spaces she is in, translating them into music that brings light to journeys often kept in the dark by our society. Her words and voice gently touch the tender spaces within us that crave to be held and loved.

Parminder Kaur Bhandal is a visual artist, creative producer and poet, whose practice focuses on re-centring peripheral bodies and disrupting traditional narratives around people and place. Across much of her work, she utilises forms of photography, video and installation to pay her respects to the community and the land that has so generously nurtured her.

Oscar Kearsley is an artist from Naarm (Melbourne, Australia). Focusing on photography, print and asemic writing, his work explores the anxieties of youth in the modern world; regarding both the exterior world and the mind.

Lily Nguyen is a photographer and illustrator living in Naarm (Melbourne, Australia). Her art practice explores cultural identity and storytelling, stemming from her Vietnamese-Australian background. Recently Lily has developed further work on themes of public safety for women navigating social and cultural situations.

Kirra is a lived experience consultant with Berry Street's Y-Change initiative and a youth focused peer support worker at Take Two. An artist, writer and speaker, Kirra's key areas of expertise are in youth mental ill health, homelessness, family violence and sexual assault.

charli gayheart (fae/them) is a queer disabled collagist and writer in Naarm. fae utilises art and writing to express and understand themselves. Exploring their experiences of love and loss, fae encourages us to reflect on and validate our grief. You can see more of their art on @gayheartcreative on instagram.

Summaiya is an aspiring poet who finds solace in artistic expression through diverse mediums. She lives in Naarm (Melbourne). Her upbringing in a culturally rich environment exposed her to the beauty of Urdu and Arabic poetry, igniting her passion for the art form from a young age. Her poems serve as a canvas for her innermost musings, with each verse reflecting her deepest thoughts and emotions. Drawing inspiration from her own life experiences, she delves into themes related to trauma, grief, love, and depression.

Olivia Chung is an emerging artist based on unceded Wurundjeri Country. Working across sound, video and poetry, she explores the liminal attitudes of trauma that pervade our increasingly capitalist society. She hopes to bring attention to the insidious ways trauma impacts us on a personal and societal level, offering shared space to contemplate alternate modalities of living geared towards collective liberation and embodied healing.

Acknowledgements

We acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on whose country we live and work, the Woiwurrung and Boonwurrung peoples of the Kulin Nation (Naarm) and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

We would also like to thank Monica Forson and Jane Chen for their feedback on this Issues Paper.

About CRIS

The Centre for Resilient and Inclusive Societies (CRIS) is a research and program based think tank consortium of eight Australian and international academic, community and industry partners - Deakin University, Western Sydney University, Victoria University, Resilience Research Centre - Dalhousie University (Canada), Australian Multicultural Foundation, Centre for Multicultural Youth, RAND Australia and the Institute for Strategic Dialogue (UK). CRIS exists to deliver research, programs and inform policies that advance and enrich our local, national and international community, cohesion and resilience. CRIS works on issues including social polarisation and disengagement from the public sphere, the rise of social exclusivist identities based on ethnicity, religion or culture, the influence of global conflicts and tensions on local environments and actors, and the social harms created when grievances and alienation translate into violent action against specific groups or society at large. CRIS activities include learning and capacity-building opportunities for positive community and policy interventions.