

The art of recovery: One day at a time

A therapeutic street art project initiated by VincentCare’s Quin House and RLAD (Reconstructing Lives After Dependence), April– June 2017

Carla van Laar

Overview

During the last week of June 2017, Melbourne train commuters, cyclists and pedestrians witnessed a group of community members create a colorful multi-media mural at Jewell Station, in Brunswick, Melbourne. This was the outcome of a therapeutic street art project, carried out by men who have accessed support services at VincentCare Victoria’s Quin House and RLAD program. They are on journeys of recovery, from homelessness and dependence into clean living and independence. Their artwork tells a story about these journeys from despair and ‘lost-ness’ to hope and connection.

This mural of hope and support was painted as a way of building bridges between the wider community and people who are experiencing homelessness and dependency, with the intention of creating a community of care and collaboration. The artists wanted the mural to reach out to passers-by in the community, to engage them, and to encourage people to stop, look and reflect.

Creative workshops ran over ten weeks during April to June 2017, and the process of painting onsite took place across the final five days of the project. The artwork was created using multi-media methods, including brush-painted art, sprayed graffiti art, paper stickers, and prose created by the group during the workshops. A celebratory launch was held onsite on Thursday 29 June 2017.

Project narrative: ‘One day at a time’

Quin House initiated the mural project with project funding from VincentCare. I was approached to work on the project, which

Statistics at a glance – what was involved?

Quin House and RLAD participants	14
Community Development Officer	1
Art therapist	1
Community volunteers	12
People attending the launch	40
Hours spent planning, promoting, seeking and obtaining a wall	8
Hours of developmental workshops at Quin House	40
Hours of painting on site	30
Hours hosting the launch	2
<i>Moreland Leader</i> print story	1
Melbourne street art blogs giving social media coverage	3
Viewers of the mural	1000s

included firstly securing a wall site. My early work involved writing letters and meeting with developers, NeoMetro, to gain their support in donating the use of a prominent wall. This wall was selected because of its location at a train station and the potential to be seen by thousands of commuters.

Before the workshops commenced I visited Quin House and was introduced to residents who were potential participants. I chatted to them about the project and showed them photos of the wall. I also asked them about their creative interests and looked at some of their own artwork, including sketches, tattoos and graffiti art.

The project commenced with a field trip attended by eight participants, the Quin House Community Development Officer, and the art therapist – me. We walked through the Melbourne

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