

Creative Transitions:

SUPPORTING QUEENSLAND WOMEN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS TO REBUILD THEIR LIVES

SUMMARY BROCHURE

Creative Transitions was 12-month cross-sector pilot initiative designed to support women transitioning out of homelessness.

Delivered across four sites in Brisbane and Logan, including transitional housing and community-based settings, the program integrated trauma-informed, strengths-based music practices within existing service environments.

The program aimed to address a critical gap between crisis accommodation and stable housing, where isolation, instability, and limited engagement opportunities often persist, with significant implications for health and wellbeing for women and their children into the future.

At a Glance

SCALE AND REACH



12-month program



4 sites (housing and community)



21 workshops delivered



32 women
+ 20 children engaged
+ 7 support workers

CO-DESIGNED APPROACH



Built with participants and service partners



Trauma-informed music therapy facilitation



Reflective talking circles and debriefs embedded

CREATIVE OUTPUTS



3 original songs released



Ongoing creative works
(lyrics, drawings, movement)

SUSTAINABLE IMPACT



Staff capacity-building



Music integrated into counselling and service delivery



Evidence for sector-wide implementation



WHY THIS WORK MATTERS

Domestic and family violence is a significant public health priority and the leading cause of homelessness for women in Australia, with women and children comprising the vast majority of those affected.

While many services respond to immediate crisis needs, the transitional phase remains under-resourced. This is a critical gap because this transitional time is integral for setting women and their children up to thrive and flourish as they recover and reintegrate with their communities. During this period, women often experience:

- Social isolation
- Loss of identity and confidence
- Limited opportunities for meaningful participation.

Creative Transitions addressed this gap not through services alone, but by creating a complementary space for connection, expression, and agency through music.

HOW THE PROGRAM WAS DESIGNED

The program was facilitated by a registered music therapist and used participatory music-making, including songwriting, drumming, singing, and listening, to create:

- Safe, non-judgemental spaces
- Opportunities for self-expression
- Shared experiences of connection and belonging
- Pathways to rebuild identity and confidence.

Participants consistently described the experience as deeply therapeutic:

I felt like it was **actually therapy**.
Music therapy. I felt like it was
good for the soul.

Importantly, music functioned as both a therapeutic tool and a social connector, accessible across cultures and languages.

Transformational Outcomes



EMOTIONAL REGULATION & WELLBEING

- » Increased calm, relaxation, and reduced stress
- » Music used as a daily self-care tool
- » Strong co-regulation between mothers and children

"[It made me feel] happy, calm, and energised."

"I love singing. It helps your body explore emotions."



AGENCY, VOICE, & IDENTITY

- » Increased confidence and self-expression
- » Creative authorship through songwriting
- » Shifts from crisis identity to strengths-based identity

"This music program has allowed the voice of the women to come into this space, as well [as] for caseworkers, for counsellors, and [for] admin workers and business."



SOCIAL CONNECTION & BELONGING

- » Strong peer relationships and group cohesion
- » Reduced isolation
- » Enhanced parent-child connection

"Food brings us together, and so does music."

"I like we could all work as a team to come up with an idea for the song. It shows good perspective of an actual family—especially young mums."



HOPE, CAPABILITY, & RE-ENGAGEMENT

- » New skills and creative confidence
- » Future-oriented thinking and aspirations
- » Re-engagement in daily life despite challenges

"She has felt free again, and it has opened up something inside of her where she has been able to get back out in the world, and the world has rewarded her with her own home."

THE POWER OF MUSIC IN RECOVERY

Across all sites, music emerged as a powerful, embodied resource for healing:

If I was in a space where I am **angry** or **feel rage**, and I sing this song, it could be *very strong*.

Music enabled:

- Emotional regulation without needing words
- Safe expression of complex experiences
- Reconnection with joy, creativity, and identity.

"I want to put something out there with my voice."

WHAT MAKES IT WORK

The program has been shaped by several key enablers:

- **Trauma-informed facilitation**
 - Safe, flexible, and participant-led environments
- **Strong partnerships**
 - Close collaboration between facilitators and service providers
- **Cultural responsiveness**
 - Adaptation to diverse linguistic and cultural contexts
- **Embedded delivery**
 - On-site programs reduce barriers to participation

WHAT GETS IN THE WAY

- Competing priorities (housing, legal, employment needs)
- Inconsistent attendance due to life instability
- Resource and funding constraints
- Cultural and language barriers requiring adaptation

Yet even within these constraints, participants continued to engage.

It's about **helping the women** being able to come into a place of *feeling safe* in their bodies so that then they can co-regulate that **feeling of regulation** and *safety* with their children. And it actually **takes a lot of work** to get there.

CREATIVE OUTPUTS AS EVIDENCE

Participant-created works, including songs, lyrics, and artwork, have served as powerful evidence of impact:

- Demonstrating skill, confidence, and voice
- Capturing personal journeys of transformation
- Enabling advocacy and broader sector engagement.

This project has become an **important part** of my *healing* and creative journey, and *your support* has played a **significant role** in that.

BROADER IMPACT

In addition to significant wellbeing benefit for participants, the program has helped reshape practice within each site in an ongoing way:

- Staff integrated music into counselling and playgroups
- Service environments shifted towards more creative care
- Researchers and facilitators reported renewed understanding of arts as essential, not supplementary.

We've started using *music* in **counselling sessions** now.

KEY INSIGHTS

Creative practice can be a core component of recovery, supporting:

- Emotional stability
- Identity rebuilding
- Social connection
- Pathways to stable housing and life re-engagement.

LOOKING FORWARD

To build stronger pathways out of homelessness in ways that strengthen ongoing health and wellbeing for women and their children, our research has identified the need for:

- **Investment**
 - Sustainable funding for creative, trauma-informed programs
- **Integration**
 - Embedding arts within housing, health, and community services
- **Co-design**
 - Programs shaped by women's lived experience
- **Cross-sector collaboration**
 - Bringing together arts, health, and social services

Creative Transitions shows that when women are given space to create, connect, and be heard:

- Confidence grows
- Identities are rebuilt
- Futures become imaginable.

Recovery is not just about housing; it is about creating the space for women to experience a sense of belonging, voice, and hope so that they can reach their fullest potential for health and wellbeing.

Creative Transitions is led by Griffith University in partnership with Queensland Women and Girls' Health Promotion Program and delivery partners Peggy's Place, Lady Musgrave Trust, and YFS.

To read the full report: Bartleet, B.-L., Dunston, S., Myers, L., Heard, E., & Way, A. (2026). *Creative Transitions: Supporting Queensland Women Experiencing Homelessness to Rebuild Their Lives* [Final Report]. Creative Arts Research Institute, Griffith University.

To view all the Creative Transitions resources, visit our website: <https://creativetransitions.org>.

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