

Creative Transitions:

A HEALTH PROMOTION APPROACH FOR WOMEN'S RECOVERY AND WELLBEING

OPPORTUNITIES FOR THE HEALTH SECTOR

Creative Transitions demonstrates how trauma-informed, arts-based interventions can be embedded within health social service systems to improve outcomes for women transitioning out of homelessness due to domestic and family violence (DFV).

The *Creative Transitions* program aligns strongly with the Prevention Strategic Framework by:

- Addressing determinants of health related to housing instability, isolation, and trauma
- Supporting mental health and wellbeing
- Delivering place-based, culturally responsive care
- Strengthening prevention and early intervention pathways.

WHY THIS MATTERS FOR HEALTH SYSTEMS

Women experiencing DFV and homelessness face compounding health inequities, including:

- Trauma-related mental health impacts
- Social isolation and disconnection
- Barriers to accessing safe, supportive care
- Limited opportunities to rebuild identity and wellbeing.

The transition period between crisis support and independent living is a critical window, yet it is often under-supported.

Creative Transitions shows that health outcomes can be strengthened through appropriately facilitated music making opportunities that can complement clinical care.

A HEALTH PROMOTION APPROACH IN ACTION

Delivered across housing and community settings, the *Creative Transitions* program integrated:

- Trauma-informed music therapy practices by an accredited music therapist
- Co-designed, participant-led delivery
- Embedded partnerships with service providers.

Activities such as songwriting, drumming, and group music-making created safe, non-clinical entry points into wellbeing support.

HEALTH & WELLBEING OUTCOMES

1. Mental Health and Emotional Regulation

Participants experienced improvements in:

- Stress reduction
- Emotional regulation
- Mood and energy.

Music provided an accessible, self-directed mental health tool, supporting prevention and early intervention.

2. Identity, Agency, and Empowerment

The program supported women in:

- Rebuilding confidence and self-worth
- Reclaiming voice following experiences of coercion and control
- Developing agency in decision-making.

This aligns with the Prevention Strategic Framework's focus on empowerment and health literacy.

3. Social Connection and Belonging

Social isolation is a key driver of poor health outcomes.

The program created:

- Safe spaces for connection
- Peer support networks
- Strengthened parent-child relationships.

These outcomes directly support protective health factors such as connection and belonging.

4. Hope, Capability, and Re-engagement

Participants demonstrated:

- Increased confidence to pursue goals
- Re-engagement in daily life
- Renewed sense of future possibility.

These outcomes reflect **long-term determinants of health**, including stability, autonomy, and purpose.

KEY HEALTH SYSTEM INSIGHTS

1. Creative Practice as a Mechanism for Promoting Health and Wellbeing

Music-based programs can:

- Reduce stress and emotional dysregulation
- Support recovery from trauma
- Strengthen resilience.

2. Non-Clinical Entry Points Matter

Many women may not engage with traditional health services. Creative programs can provide:

- Safe, stigma-free engagement
- Non-verbal pathways to support
- Flexible, culturally inclusive care.

3. Intergenerational Health Benefits

Music programs can strengthen:

- Parent-child attachments.
- Co-regulation and emotional development
- Supporting early childhood and family health priorities.

4. Workforce and System Benefits

Support staff reported:

- Increased capacity to use creative arts in practice
- Integration into counselling and care environments.

ENABLING CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS

Aligned with health promotion and prevention principals for good practice:

- Trauma-informed, culturally responsive delivery
- Co-design with lived experience
- Place-based, embedded programs
- Cross-sector collaboration (health, housing, community).

SYSTEM BARRIERS TO ADDRESS

To scale impact, the following must be considered:

- Resource and funding constraints
- Competing priorities for participants
- Cultural and language accessibility
- Workforce understanding of creative therapies.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE HEALTH SYSTEM

Embed creative health promotion in core services

- Playgroups, mental health programs, housing services
- DFV recovery pathways

Invest in scalable, evidence-based models

- Sustain and expand programs like *Creative Transitions*

Strengthen cross-sector integration

- Health × housing × community × arts

Prioritise culturally responsive, co-designed approaches

- Particularly for First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse communities

KEY TAKEAWAYS FOR POLICY & PRACTICE

Health outcomes improve when women are supported to:

- Regulate emotions
- Rebuild identity
- Connect with others
- Re-engage with life.

Creative practice can enable all of these.

Arts-based, trauma-informed programs can be a critical lever for promoting health and wellbeing and supporting preventive health and crisis programming.

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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