

## **Together: Art as therapy and community harm reduction awareness**

### **Authors:**

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### **Background:**

Each year international overdose awareness day campaigns to end overdose. This project drew on the aims of the day to develop a local response which drew together staff and consumers from mental health and AOD consumers as well as the wider community.

### **Description of Model of Care/Intervention:**

Project leaders drew on a combination of clinical and professional backgrounds (mental health, AOD, Aboriginal Health Worker, occupational therapist), lived experience, culture, and personal interests to build grassroots connections and create a community art and health promotion project.

Sessions were held in a variety of settings including mental health and alcohol and other drugs services, an art-as therapy mental health group called Arts in Recovery, and the wider community. Each person drew from their own cultures, experiences, and colouring in or creating their own pieces to recognise without stigma those we've lost to overdose. Included in this artwork are colouring sheets by Biripi artist (and project co-lead) Kate Forbes-Walker who created culturally appropriate art with a relevant story.

The artwork was on show at the Arts in Recovery exhibition and used to illustrate a flyer/postcard with overdose awareness resources.

### **Effectiveness/Acceptability/Implementation:**

The response from participants was positive, and the resource developed continues to be printed and shared in our local community.

### **Conclusion and Next Steps:**

The project leads plan to lead further collaborative art projects with a focus on reduction of harm and reduction of stigma. Future projects are likely to have increased engagement with lived and living experience advocates and CALD communities

### **Implications for Practice or Policy:**

Art practice can provide meaningful, culturally appropriate occupation in the AOD setting. Partnerships between different practice settings and wider community to engage can contribute to reduction in stigma, and increased knowledge about overdose prevention.

### **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

*During the completion of this project, all authors were employed by Hunter New England Local Health District*