

NSW Creative Ageing Framework. 2031

Background

The NSW Government has released (April 2021) a framework of information and policy guidelines relating to the concept of creative ageing and the many benefits the arts can deliver to older people. There are many firsts in the 24 page document which can be found at

<https://www.facs.nsw.gov.au/download?file=805614>

Arts Mid North Coast has produced this summary of key matters in the Framework. It does not necessarily follow the same order but seeks to highlight the matters that may be of most value and interest to our community.

Aims of the NSW Creative Ageing Framework (P8)

The NSW Creative Ageing Framework has been developed to promote an increase in opportunities for creative participation among older people across NSW. It aims to help prepare government, the creative and cultural sector, the aged services sector and the community to meet an increasing need for services and age-friendly communities. The framework's objectives include to:

- enhance the profile of creative ageing programs in NSW
- show that creative ageing practice is relevant to a wide range of stakeholders
- acknowledge the importance of sharing information and learning from good practice
- endorse collaborative relationships and formal partnerships between stakeholders to increase resources for sustainable creative ageing programs.

The framework has the ultimate aim of supporting older people in NSW to age well, to experience the benefits of living longer, and to enjoy opportunities to participate in, contribute to and be included in their communities. It encourages awareness of ways that participation might be promoted and how programs might be best designed.

The three key focus areas set out in the framework are essential to future action to develop and provide sustainable and successful creative ageing programs across NSW: promoting awareness and participation; resourcing and sustaining programs; and collaborations and partnerships. .

The framework provides a broad overview, based on the NSW Ageing Strategy's approach that responding to the ageing population is everyone's business, including government, the private sector, not-for-profit organisations, communities and individuals. Together we need to respond to and prepare for a wide range of life experiences as people grow older.

What is Creative Ageing? (P4)

...Using arts and cultural activities to promote imagination and support older people to age well is known as 'creative ageing' – a term coined in the 1990s by prominent US psychiatrist and gerontologist, Dr Gene Cohen.

Creative ageing is a spectrum of practice being used around the world that has been shown to:

- improve social connections, health and wellbeing, and creative life for older people
- challenge stereotypical perceptions about older people and ageing

- promote effective partnerships and networks between government agencies, the private sector, not-for-profit organisations, older people and other individuals, and communities that support older people to age well.

Creative ageing practice encompasses older people's ongoing participation in arts and cultural activities in many circumstances, including:

- for new challenges and a sense of achievement
- for social and creative connections and shared experience
- to maintain and improve cognitive, physical and mental health and wellbeing
- to continue their professional practice as artists and as other workers in the creative and cultural sector
- to participate in recreational creative activities
- to connect with creative and cultural experiences as audience members
- for pleasure.

Benefits of Creative Ageing Practice (P7)

Extensive research and evaluations provide compelling evidence of the positive effects of participation in creative ageing programs on the cognitive, physical and mental health and wellbeing of older people. The research also demonstrates the personal, societal and economic benefits of older people's participation in the arts.

The positive impacts of community-based creative and art programs run by professional facilitating artists point to:

- health promotion and disease prevention in older people
- maintaining independence and reducing dependency
- the reduction of risk factors that drive the need for long-term care
- success in improving overall health, with a decreased dependency on medications and doctor visits, which leads to a reduction in healthcare costs.

The 'cognitive capital' of older people is a resource for society that enables greater productivity in both the paid and unpaid workforces. Older people who report higher levels of wellbeing also have better cognitive function. Better cognitive function helps individuals age well and enables many aspects of everyday life, such as managing finances, planning travel, and managing medical conditions.

Participating in arts and culture provides older people with opportunities to develop, use, showcase and pass on their skills. This can challenge negative stereotypes associated with ageing, transform community attitudes, and gain social support and respect for older people. Involvement in professional arts programs can be particularly effective in achieving these aims because professional arts practice:

- is highly visible in the community

- values and builds diverse talents and skills
- values participants' strengths and capacities, rather than emphasising deficits or decline
- creates art that connects people, including people across generations
- is integral to our identity as individuals and as a society.

NSW Creative Ageing Framework Focus Areas (P11)

The framework sets out three key focus areas that are essential to future action to provide sustainable and successful creative ageing programs across NSW:

1. promoting awareness and participation
2. resourcing and sustaining programs
3. collaboration and partnerships.

Promoting Awareness and Participation

Increasing awareness and appreciation of how arts programs enhance older people's quality of life and benefit the community is an important step towards encouraging the arts and other relevant sectors to deliver accessible creative ageing programs. It is also essential to encouraging older people to engage in creative ageing programs as active participants, facilitating artists and/or volunteers, and as audience members. The framework is part of the NSW Government's plan to:

- increase awareness in the community of the value of creative ageing practice for social inclusion, health and wellbeing
- challenge and reduce negative stereotypes and perceptions in the community about ageing and older people
- demonstrate that creativity and a rich engagement with arts and culture are part of everyday life for older people.

Older people contribute to the economy and society as volunteers, paid full-time or part-time workers, and as students in further education. They also contribute through the support they provide to family members and others, including as carers. They influence the economy as consumers, as their demand for services creates new markets and expands existing ones. Increased awareness, resources and service provision for creative ageing programs and infrastructure lead to:

- increased participation of older people across NSW in creative ageing programs tailored to their individual abilities, aspirations, achievements and needs
- increased opportunities for older people in NSW to stay connected, maintain social networks and contribute to their communities
- increased opportunities for older artists to continue their professional arts practice
- promotion of age-friendly communities through the design and building of cities, towns, venues and spaces.

Resourcing and Sustaining Programs

Evaluations of creative ageing programs around the world demonstrate these programs are successful when they are delivered as long-term, sustainable arts programs. This means they comprise a series of activities that enable creative development in an art form, and encourage participation in the arts for older people as creators, teachers, audiences and organisers. Included in the many actions for resourcing and sustaining programs are:

- foundations in effective infrastructure and good practice
- the involvement of key stakeholders to drive advocacy and the development of appropriate creative ageing programs across all art forms
- the use of professional artists
- provision of professional teaching resources and staffing
- principles around sound creative learning environments and practices for older adults.

Collaboration and Partnerships

Funding and other resources for creative ageing programs and initiatives can be increased and used more efficiently and effectively if collaborative arrangements or partnerships are established to leverage additional resources, including through philanthropic funding or in-kind support. Partnerships and collaborations across the government, the arts and the aged services sectors, as well as across community and private sector organisations, can:

- help share expertise
- leverage networks
- enable a collective approach to the design and resourcing of creative ageing programs
- reach older people who may not have been engaged with the creative and cultural sector previously.

Arts and cultural expertise may be a valuable source for identifying innovative and productive relationships for delivering creative ageing programs. It can also facilitate changes in cultural and community attitudes to the creative output of older people. Partnerships for creative ageing programs should aim to:

- increase collaboration by a wide range of stakeholders to provide more opportunities for creative participation by older people
- promote strong professional networks within and between organisations delivering creative ageing programs
- assist the arts, screen and cultural sector and the aged services sector to deliver sustainable creative ageing programs in an environment of increasing demand.

Creative ageing programs will have a broader impact and sustainability if the benefits across health, social services and the arts are recognised, and a collaborative approach is taken between levels of government and with communities working on programs.

The NSW Government's NSW Health and the Arts Framework, provides the foundations to support collaboration between health services and the arts sector, including governance principles and functions, and strategies for partnerships and funding.

Framework Focus Areas – Participants and Stakeholders (P13)

The framework's three focus areas – promoting awareness and participation; resourcing and sustaining programs; and collaborations and partnerships – need to be applied by a range of key stakeholders and participants.

Making creative ageing a reality is the responsibility of many individuals and organisations, across a spectrum of interests, and with differing aims and needs. The advice contained in the following table will apply in varying ways. For some it will be a 'call to action', while for others it may be advice given and actions taken as part of their professional work.

Each of the identified stakeholder groups will have its own diversity. 'Older people' are as diverse as the rest of the community and will have different experiences of and views on ageing. The term embraces a very wide range of ages, interests, socio-economic status, health and wellbeing, cultural and linguistic background, and living circumstances, along with many other factors. In general, older people may need encouragement and assistance to participate in creative ageing programs and to attend arts and cultural events and activities.

Older people are a growing market for arts programs and activities. In many cases, older people have more time to explore and develop their creativity, and continue to make valuable contributions to communities, the economy and society. Many older people remain in employment and there is a significant number of older people who are practicing professional artists, performers and cultural workers. These people are more likely to remain active and in positions within their field longer than someone who is starting out and looking to build a career. They bring lifelong experience, skills and knowledge to their work.

Many groups of professionals who interact with, support, advise and care for older people can influence, promote and sustain engagement with creative pursuits. These stakeholders, participants and potential partners include:

- ageing services and professional caregivers in long-term care facilities and residential care programs
- medical practitioners and other health professionals
- artists; arts leaders; arts, screen and cultural organisations. These may include:
 - arts service organisations, such as Ausdance NSW, Regional Arts NSW, MusicNSW and Accessible Arts; as well as state, regional and local galleries and museums; public libraries; arts centres; and the network of regional arts organisations in NSW
 - flagship visual arts organisations and performing arts companies, and the State Cultural Institutions
- arts and adult education leaders, educational institutions, researchers and consultants
- policy makers and arts funding bodies at all levels of government and the private sector. These may include:
 - local councils, which provide arts infrastructure and run cultural programs
 - NSW Government agencies, including Education; Health; Planning, Industry and Environment; and Communities and Justice

- NSW and Commonwealth Government arts agencies, including Create NSW and the Australia Council for the Arts
- philanthropists and philanthropic foundations
- major corporations and local businesses.

The report then sets out in various tables ideas and actions the above groups and organisations can take and in a following section some examples of programs already in place.