

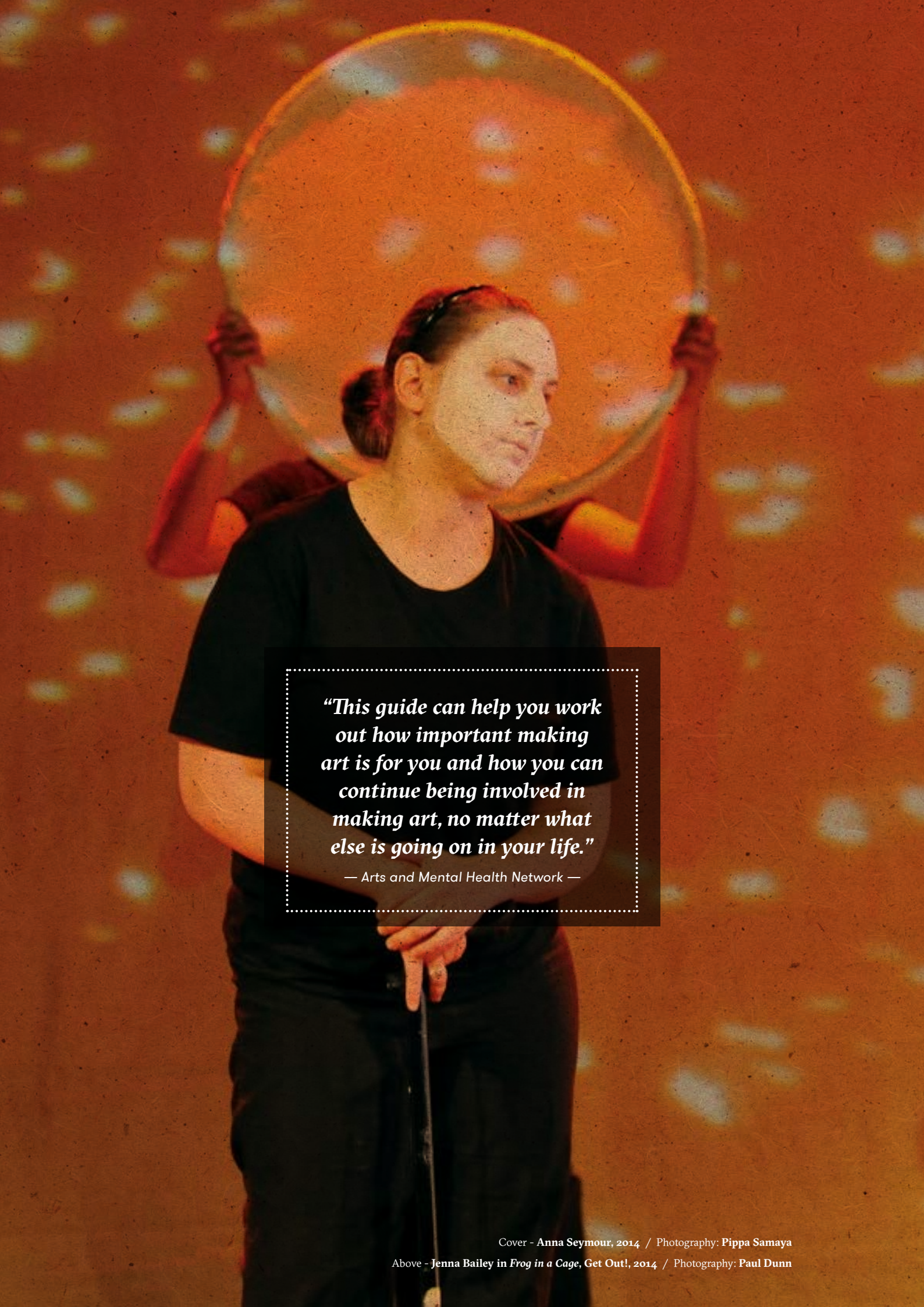


Art and You

A planning guide



**Written by and for people
with disability and mental
health issues**



"This guide can help you work out how important making art is for you and how you can continue being involved in making art, no matter what else is going on in your life."

— Arts and Mental Health Network —

Art and You — A planning guide



What is this document about?

This document is a guide to help you plan how you want to be involved in the arts. This guide includes information about your rights and gives you tools to help you to continue to make art in the way that you want.

Who is this guide for?

- People who are interested in the arts
- People who want to make art
- People who already make art (artists)

THE ARTS INCLUDE:

- Drawing
- Painting
- Dance
- Performance
- Writing
- Sculpture
- Singing
- Circus
- Music
- Film
- Craft
- Other creative activities

If this sounds like you, then this guide can help.

How do I use this guide?

- Start from the beginning and go through step-by-step
- Another person or your support team can help you go through the guide. You can read more about who can help on page 10
- You can take the guide to your National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) planning meeting. The NDIS is a new way the government is providing support to people with disability and mental health issues. You can find out more about the NDIS at www.ndis.gov.au
- You can use the guide to help you talk to family, friends and people in your community about your passion for art
- The guide can help you work out how important making art is for you and how you can continue to take part in the arts

What is in this guide?

- Information about your rights and about standing up, or advocating, for your right to do art
- Information about why the arts are important to your health and wellbeing
- Questions that can help you think and talk about your art practice
- Tools to help you to stand up, or advocate, for yourself

Not everyone will understand why you're interested in the arts. But no-one can tell you you're not an artist. If people don't understand what you are trying to tell them, then try again or find someone to help you explain.





*“Grab a cup of tea,
do as little or as
much as you can
in this workbook.”*

— Heidi, Artist —



This guide is in five sections

PART 1: Your rights and advocacy

Is about your rights and explains what self-advocacy means

PART 2: Who can help you?

Is about who can help you to make your plan and stand up for yourself, or self-advocate

PART 3: How art and your health are connected

Is about how art can help your health and wellbeing

PART 4: What art means to you

Gives you space to write about your art and what it means to you

PART 5: The next steps

Shows you the next steps you can take to plan your art activities and goals



Part 1 | Your rights and advocacy

What are my rights?

As an individual you have rights and should be treated fairly.

You have the **right** to take part in arts and culture. This right is included in two important documents that protect the rights of people with disability and mental health issues: the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights* and the *United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*.

These documents say that governments must make sure people with disability have the chance to:

- Be creative
- Make art
- Learn new creative and artistic skills

And that these things will help to improve their communities as well as their own lives.

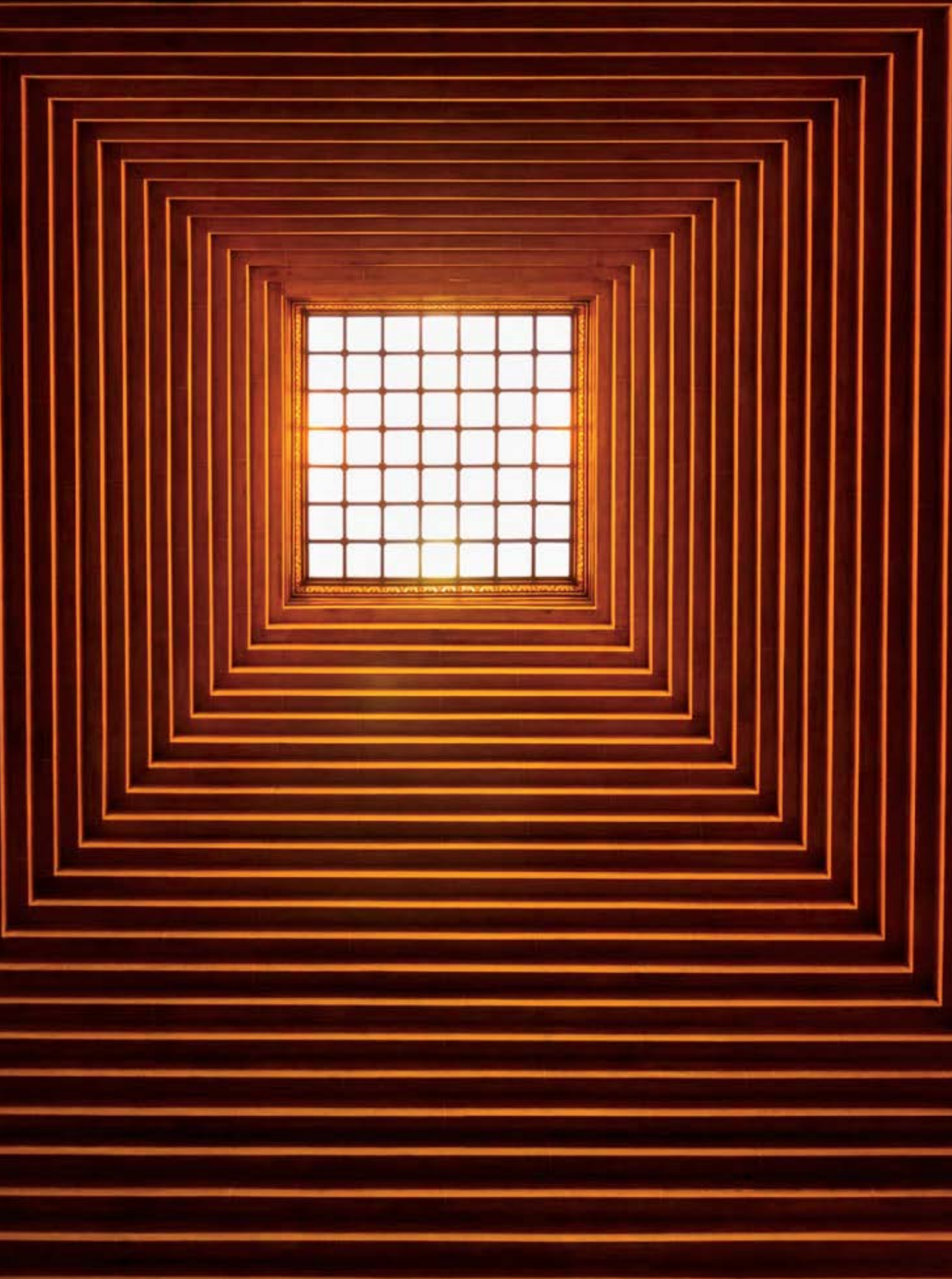
Section 30 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.
www.un.org/disabilities/convention/conventionfull.shtml

What is self-advocacy?

An advocate is someone who supports you to make sure your wishes are heard and your rights are respected. When you do this for yourself it is called self-advocacy. Self-advocacy is:

- Asking for what you want
- Sharing your wishes and goals
- Telling someone what you need
- Speaking up for yourself
- Standing up for your rights

It's okay to ask for what you want. You have a right to take part the way you want to and have control over decisions that affect you.



What is self-advocacy in the arts?

- Making your own choices in life, including creativity
- Asking to include art in your life or health plan
- Telling someone how important art is to you
- Standing up for your right to make art
- Taking responsibility for how you want to be involved in the arts

When do I need to advocate for myself?

You may need to advocate for yourself and how you want to take part in the arts in meetings with:

- NDIS Planners
- Arts and community organisations
- Your health or disability service provider
- Your family and friends

“It’s important telling people what we do”

— Larissa, Artist —





*“In my life, lots of bad luck. I was hairdresser.
Husband passed away. I lose everything. Come here
with nothing. I buy every grammar book, I teach
myself English. But every day it is not enough.*

*When I make art it is different. I communication with
no words. I feel more better. My English, not so good,
but I hope you see my happiness.”*

— Felicity, Artist —

Part 2 | Who can help you advocate?

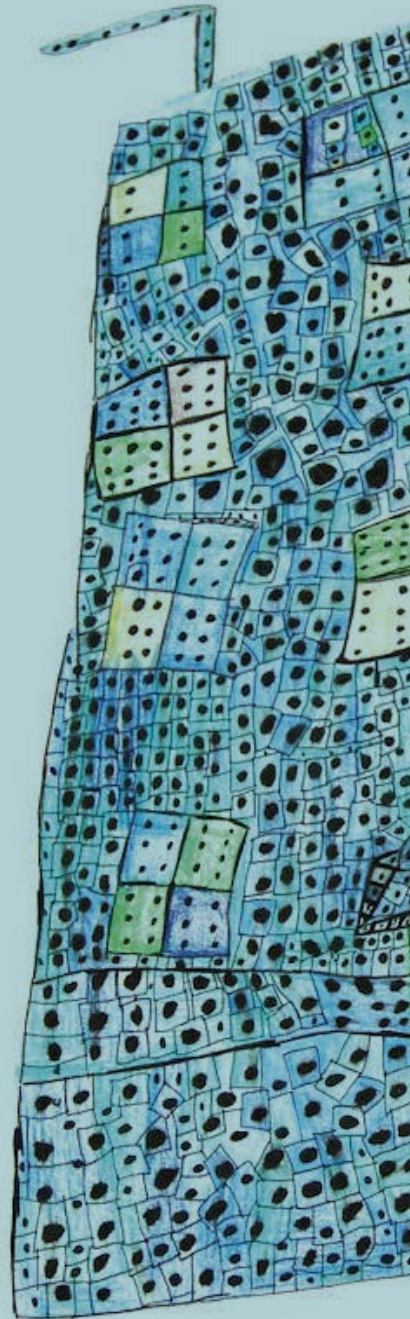
Who can I ask for help?

There are many different people who can help you to plan your goals. They can include:

- Friends and family members – these are examples of informal support people
- Staff from arts, disability, mental health and community organisations – these are examples of formal support people

Choose people who you feel comfortable to talk to and who understand your art.

It's good to have a range of people to support you from different parts of your life.



How do I choose the right people to support me?

You can talk to someone at Arts Access Victoria to help you work out who should be in your support team. A good start is to think about:

- People you know and trust
- People you think could help you stand up for what you want and need
- A person from an arts organisation that you are involved with
- Someone who knows what your daily life looks like
- Someone you would like to take with you into a meeting about your art
- Someone who understands your art and what you do
- A person from an advocacy or service organisation

Two or three people is a good number for a support team

Who can I ask to support me?

Here are some examples of people you could ask for help. Write the names of the people you would choose for your support team in the boxes below:

A friend

A family member

A person from
an art group

A person from a
Community Centre I visit

Art Support Worker

A Health Worker



“Even my most anonymous piece of artwork I do here, even my less powerful work has life here – it breathes – and it sings – with other people’s artwork, like Gavin’s sculpture or his poetry. Besides doing art, I tell you, I cannot stay away one single Wednesday.

It is the people – I feel sensitive to them. To feel friendship, this started in a very casual, shabby way, but then I realised, we all realised, after our exhibition that we are real artists. We are in the beginning stages, we have further to go, but we will get there. We will be in the art world.”

— Artstop participant —

Part 3 | How art and your health are connected

Research and evidence

Studies show that being involved in the arts can improve your health and wellbeing.

Being involved in the arts can help you to:

- Feel good about yourself
- Give your day purpose and meaning
- Stay focussed and follow through with tasks
- Not feel lonely or isolated
- Make friends and belong to a community
- Learn new skills
- Feel happier and healthier physically, emotionally and mentally
- Recognise if you are starting to feel unwell or sick
- Find a job or paid work


In the National Arts and Health Framework (<http://mcm.arts.gov.au/national-arts-and-health-framework>) cultural ministers around Australia agreed that taking part in the arts improves people's health.

“Arts and health can be a:

- *Way of communicating sensitive health issues*
- *Means of individual self-expression and personal development*
- *Tool for enhancing community engagement, social relationships and communication”*

— National Arts and Health Framework —

VicHealth reports on how community arts can improve health and wellbeing in Creative Connections (www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/media-and-resources/publications/creative-connections)



VicHealth found that community arts projects can improve the skills of the people who take part, particularly their social skills. The projects helped artists who were isolated to connect with the wider community and helped the community to appreciate the value of the artists.

— Creative Connections —

The following questions will help you to think about how art affects your life and how art makes you feel.

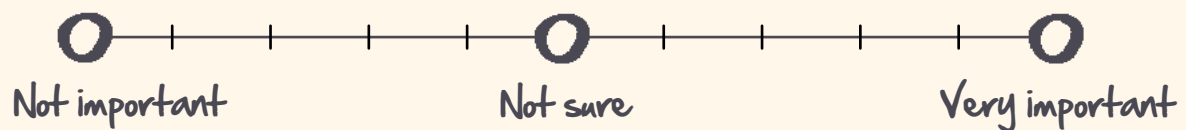
Art and your wellbeing

How does art improve your health and wellbeing?

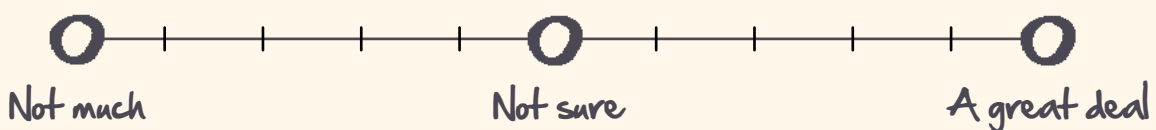
This part of the guide can help you in your planning and conversations by asking you some questions about how art connects to your health. When you complete this section, take some time to think about how art makes you feel.

Let's look at how art benefits your health. You can choose to tick the response that you most agree with, or to write a few words of your own:

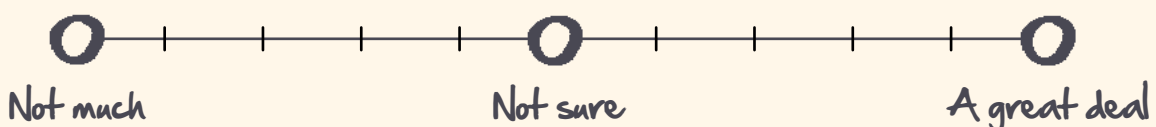
How important is art in your life?



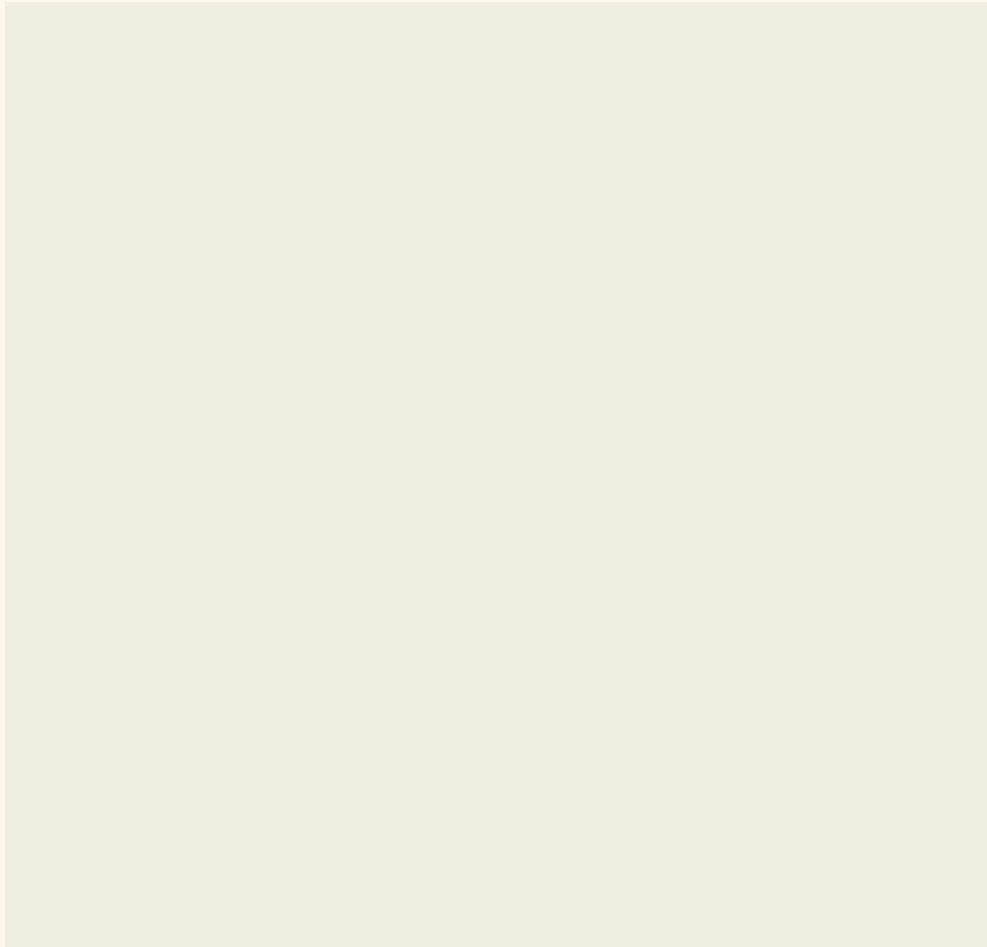
Does art make your day-to-day life better?



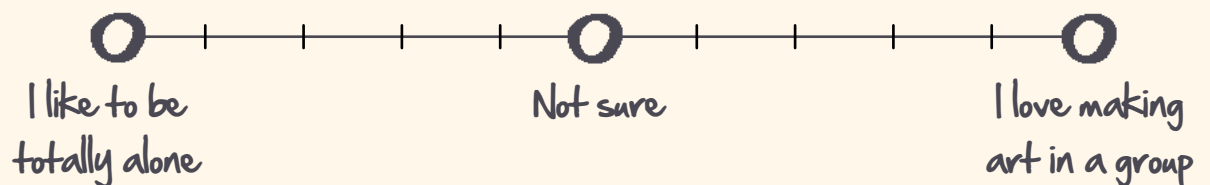
Do the arts connect you with a community? For example: by sharing your work with other people or having an exhibition.



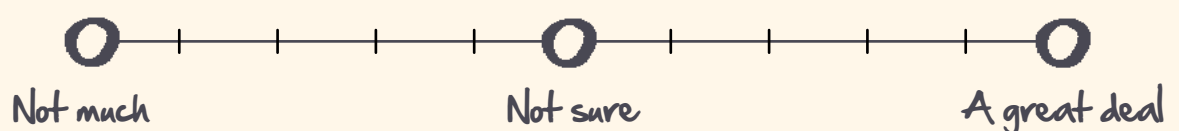
What happens when something stops you from making your art work?



Do you like to be alone when you make art?



Does making art help you to develop new skills? Which skills?



Does taking part in the arts or making art help you feel less isolated? If it does, write down how.

“Why is art important to me?”

Helps me find daily focus

Helps my cognition

Helps me understand complex things

Helps me perceive the world in a different light

It describes my internal journey

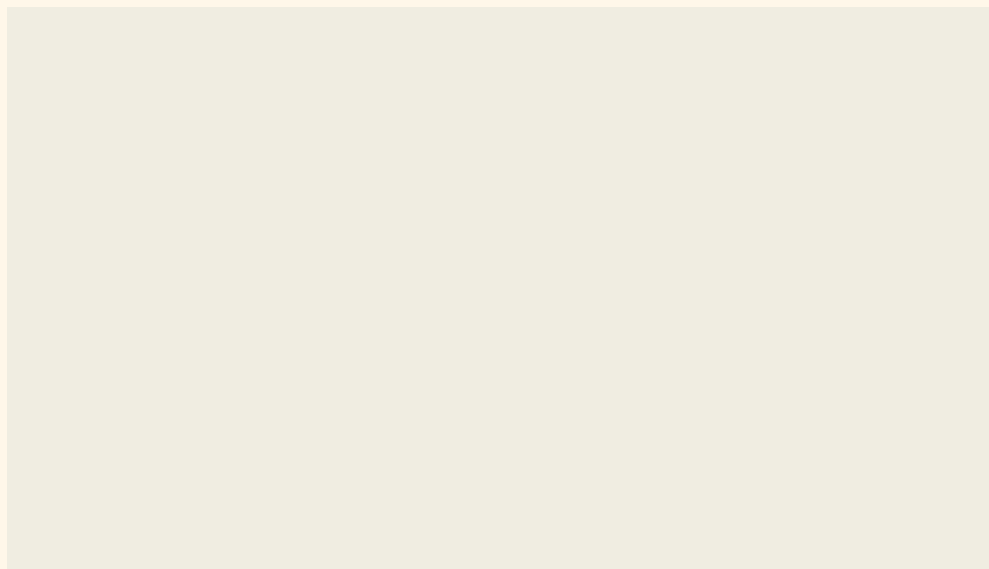
Art is my best mate”

— Kathryn, Artist —

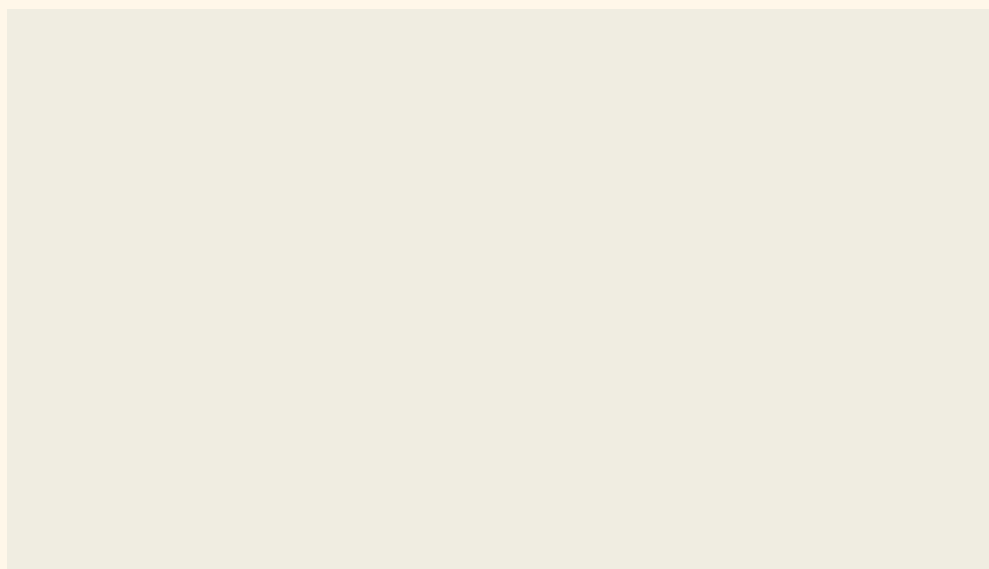
Is the social part of making art important to you?

Tick the points below that best describe what's important to you:

- ☐ Connecting with other people
- ☐ A safe and supportive place to work in
- ☐ A mixture of social and physical activities
- ☐ Feeling valued
- ☐ To be a member of an art group or network
- ☐ Other? (Write below)



How do you feel art connects you with other people?



Does your art help you to connect with your community?

Where do you make art?

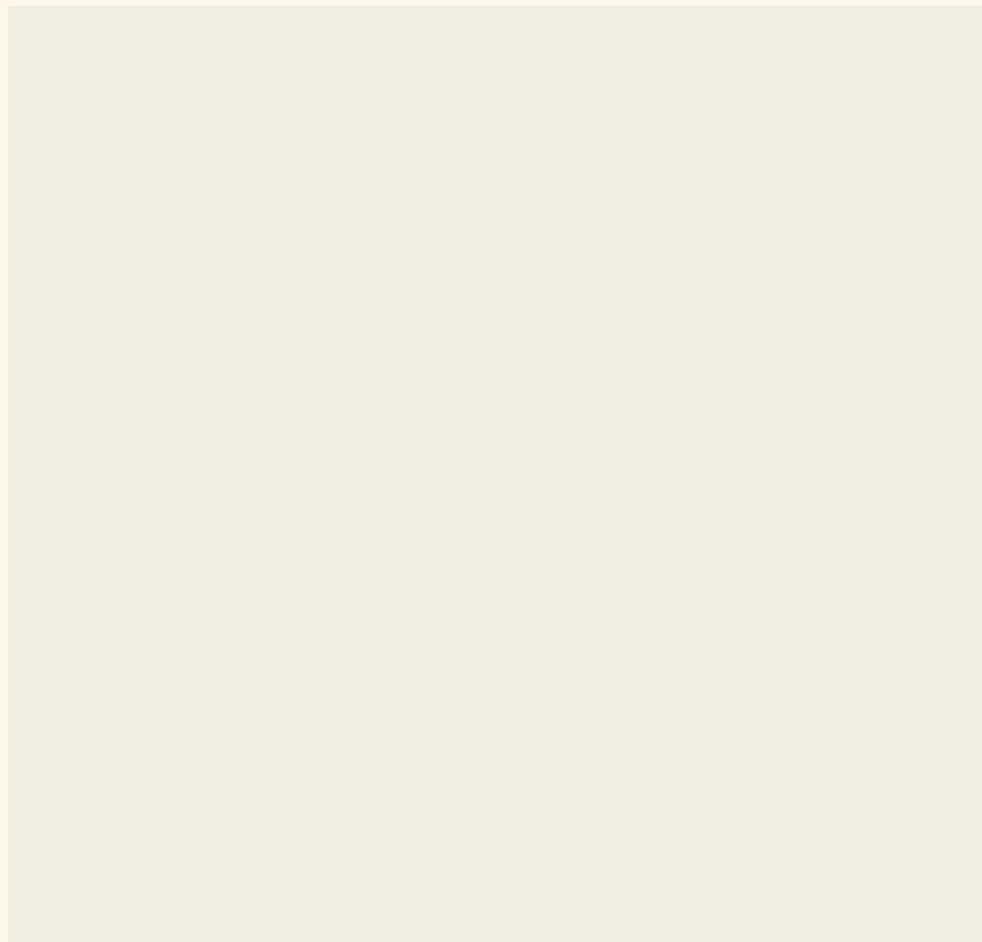
- ☐ Community centre
- ☐ Local arts organisation
- ☐ Artist-run studio
- ☐ Private studio
- ☐ Home
- ☐ Disability or Health Service Provider

Would you like to see or go to exhibitions or performances?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Unsure

If yes, what do you need to be able to do that?

For example: help with travel.

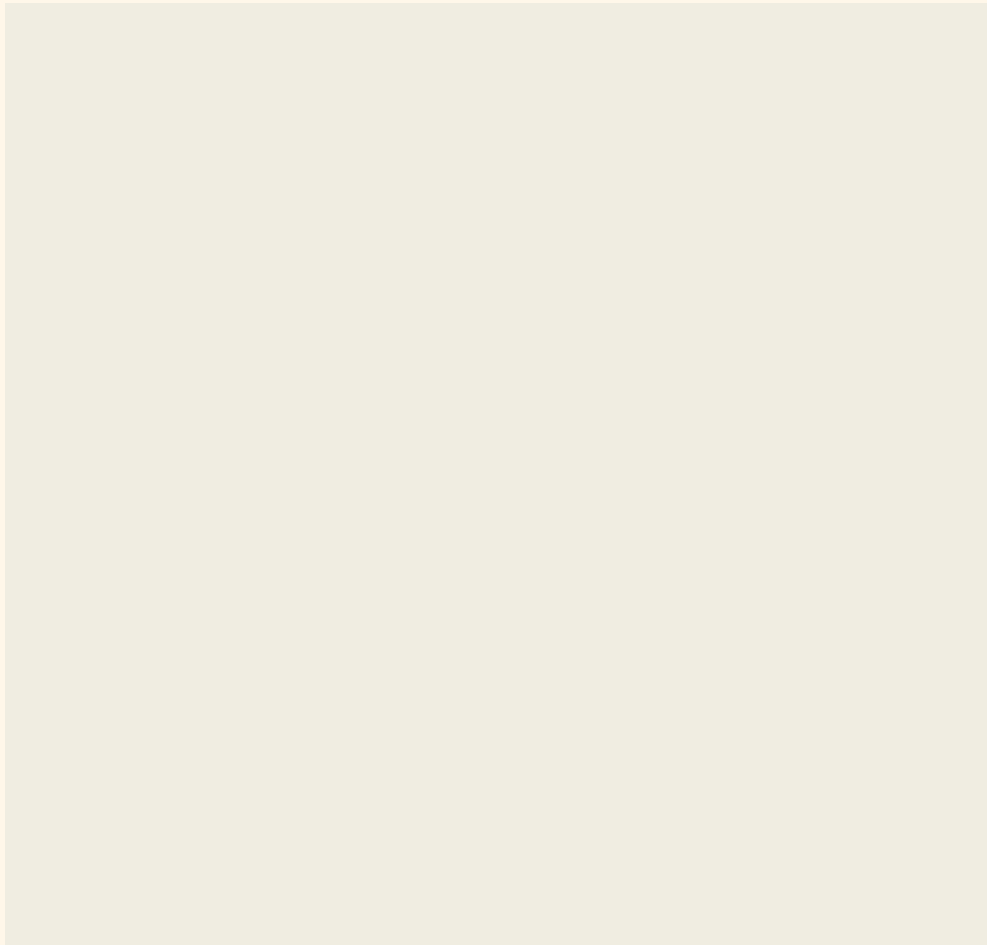


Skills development

Tick the following skills that you get from practicing your art.

Art:

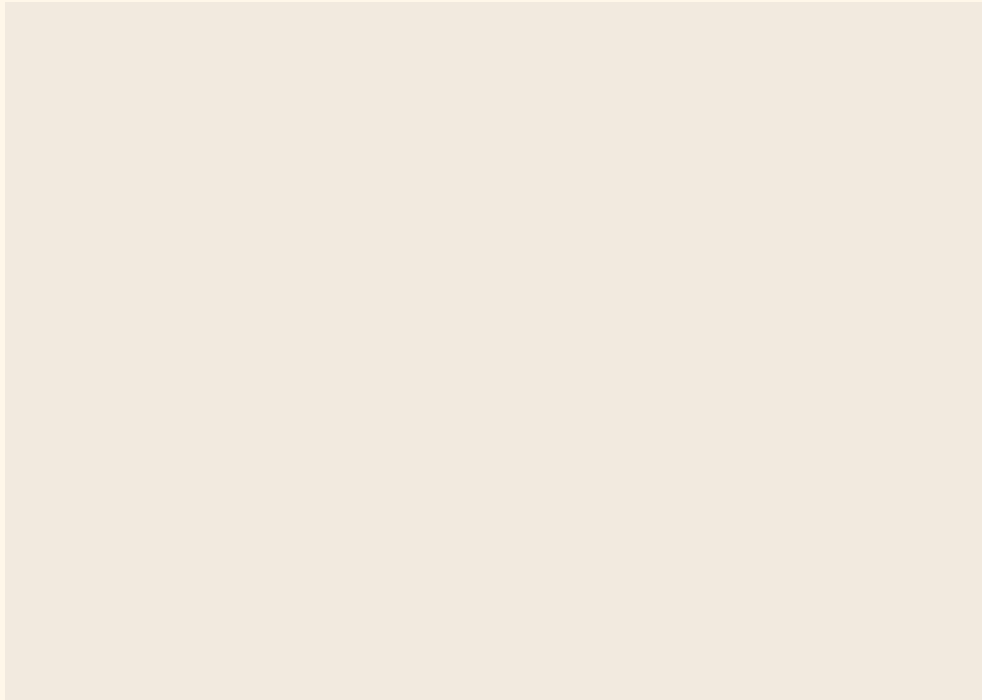
- ☐ Gives me ways to help manage my health
- ☐ Helps me to stay focussed
- ☐ Gives me a reason to get out of bed / gives me a purpose
- ☐ Helps me manage my time
- ☐ Helps me follow through with tasks
- ☐ Helps me express and communicate my ideas and emotions
- ☐ Gives me daily life skills
- ☐ Helps me be more organised
- ☐ Other? (Write below)



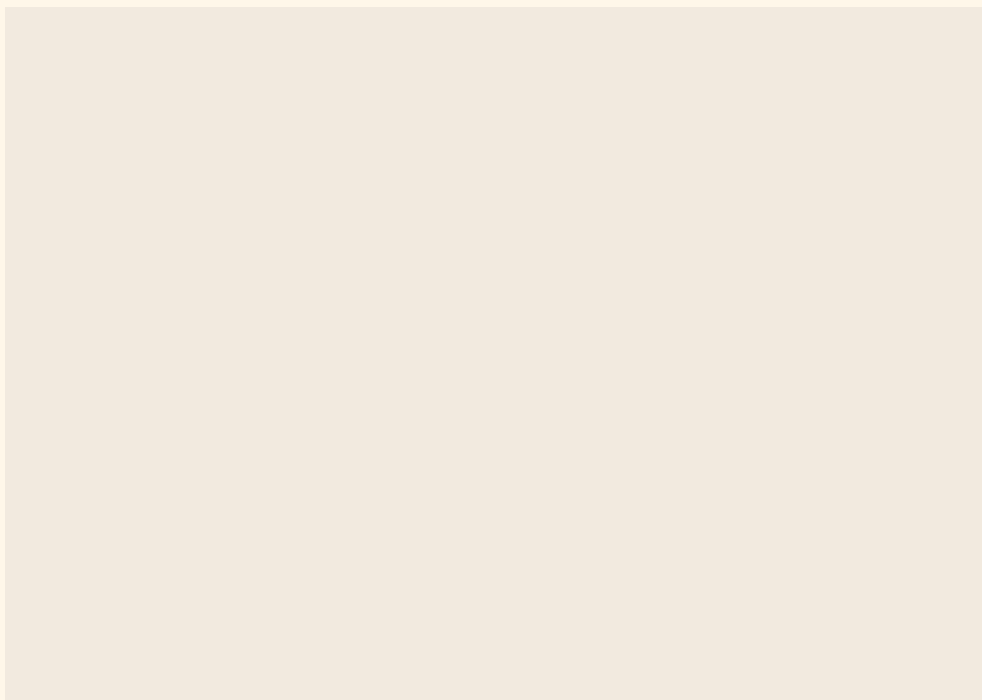
Part 4 | What art means to you

This section gives you the chance to think and write about your art.


What kind of art do you make?



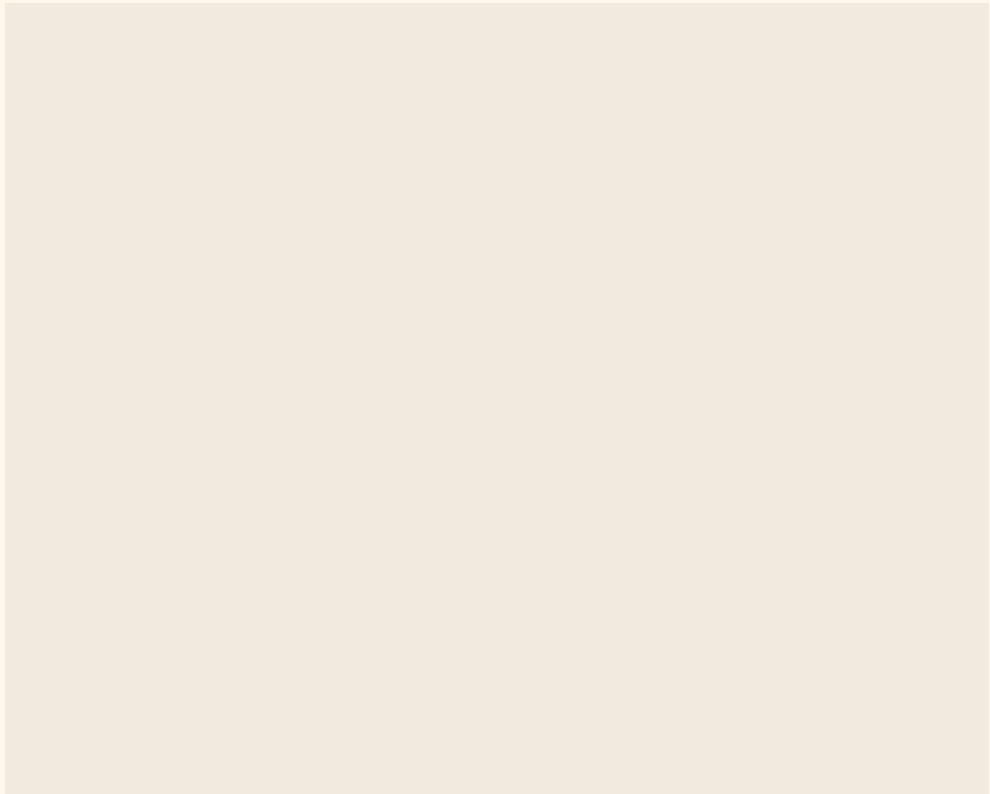
What stories do you tell through your art?



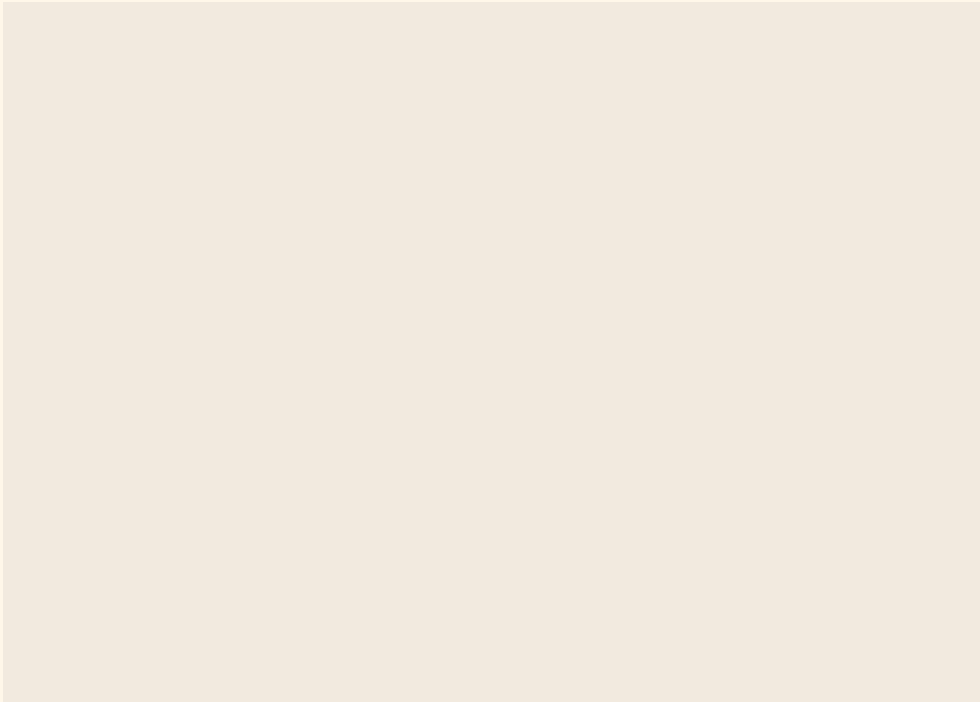
Do you want to make art alone or with others?



What kind of art would you like to make or try in the future?



Who do you want to share your artwork with?



***“I always have a plan,
even if I’m doing nothing.
And I always have a
second plan, even if
it’s a simple one.”***

— Kathryn, Artist —



"I was lost after a long career in the working sector. I found myself in a totally different environment with a mental health condition (PTSD). I couldn't focus on anything which was very foreign to me. After wandering in the wilderness it was suggested that I take up a hobby. Within a short time I was able to concentrate on something completely different from my working life. I found I loved my new art experience as a photographer. It gave me purpose to get out of bed and gave me focus on something instead of my illness. My aspirations are to establish myself in the art sector as an artist."

— Gordon, Artist —

Part 5 | The next steps

What now?

1. Tick any of the things below that you need to help you reach your artistic goals and aspirations:

- ☐ Access to art materials and spaces to work
- ☐ Access to high-quality art programs
- ☐ Someone to assist me in the studio
- ☐ Transport to get to my arts practice or community class or session
- ☐ Access to an organisation where I can practice my art
- ☐ To work with a professional artist
- ☐ Time to make and practice my art
- ☐ An Auslan interpreter
- ☐ People who support me and know me
- ☐ A friendly environment
- ☐ The chance to learn new skills
- ☐ The chance to show my art
- ☐ The chance to meet with other artists and people who share my interests
- ☐ Access to further art training
- ☐ Personal care assistance
- ☐ Managing my money
- ☐ Other? (Write below)

Remember that
you can make
changes to your
plan at any time!

2. Look at the list of things you ticked in Question 1.
Use this space to list the supports and help you need for
each of the things you ticked.

Where	When
How	What
Who can help?	Materials

Remember you can always say no if you are not happy with decisions, or with the way things are going.

3. Get together with your support team

- Talk about what you want to do with art in your life
- Talk about what you need to help you
- Share news, ideas and information with them
- Speak to other artists who have experience planning their art

4. Together with your support team, write a few sentences about what art means to you and what you want to do with your art. This is your art statement. Your answers to the questions in Part 4 (from page 22) can help you make a start on this.

- Talk about the things that affect you and what you want and need
- You have a right to be an artist and to say you want to have art in your life
- Make sure you're happy with your art statement

Now you have a statement about the importance of art in your life.





"We wait every Wednesday for this. The atmosphere here is so thick you could cut it with a knife. People are fighting and leaning over this person and that person, it is trouble with a capital T. I can't wait to come here on a Wednesday and make art. I feel like I can relax here, and my sculpture just keeps getting better and better. Sometimes I feel like I can hear this kangaroo (figure in his sculpture) singing out to me to be an artist every other day of the week."

— Gavin, Artist —

“What art means to my life

No art:

100% without peace in times of mental turmoil.

No art:

When chaos arrives there's no place of haven within.

No art:

No chance to succeed when life becomes dim.

With art:

Creative times of meditative peace.

With art:

Luminous colour even if the light is abstracted by the pain.

With art:

*Success! Physical proof of a life unseen that has no
chance of expression without creation.*

Art is spiritual.

Art is light.

Art is knowing the unknown.

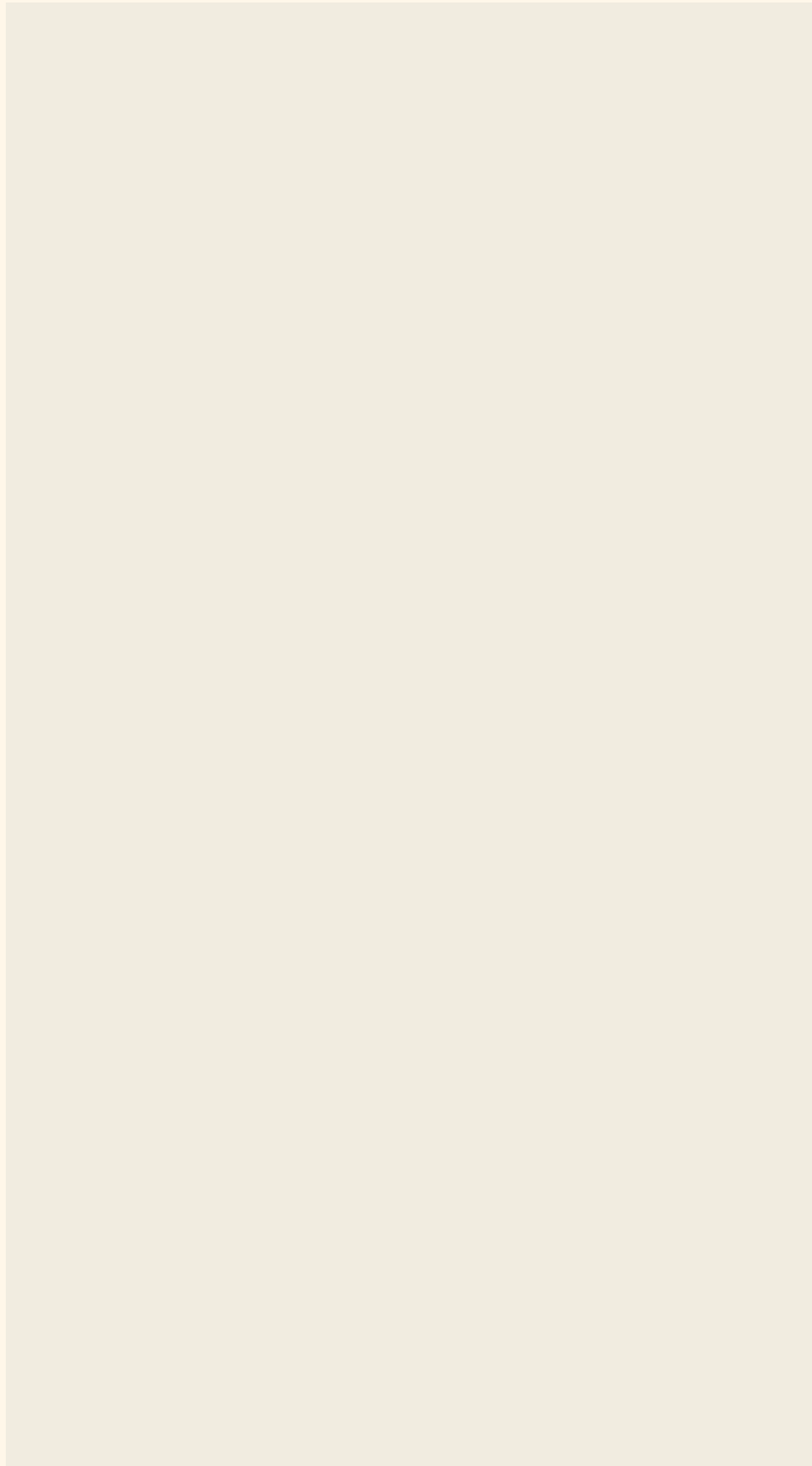
Art is God.”

— Richard, Artist —





Notes



You can contact Arts Access Victoria for more help or advice:

If you want to know more about the arts, your rights
and who can help you to plan and make art, go to
www.artsaccess.com.au/resources



ARTS ACCESS VICTORIA

Arts Access Victoria

WEBSITE: www.artsaccess.com.au

PHONE: 03 9699 8299

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