

Case study

Creative Therapy and Interactive Play Spaces

An artist collaboration with a kindy on Macleay Island created interactive play spaces and handmade instruments.

What

Macleay Island's Bay Island Early Learning and Care Early Childhood Educator, Miss Lisa Mooney, collaborated with local artist Darren Goleby to create an installation of interactive play spaces and creative art projects. Children were engaged at every step along the way, from the project's concept, to the planning and problem solving stages, through to implementation. Workshops with local musicians showed the children how to make lagerphones of wooden poles and bottle tops, and thong drum instruments.

The project embraced the concept of "reduce, reuse and recycle". Families, along with the wider island community, donated used items for the interactive play spaces. The efforts of the children were celebrated at the kindergarten open day, which showcased their creative play spaces and included a performance with the handmade instruments.

When and where

Bay Island Early Learning and Care, Macleay Island
from 27 February to 10 November 2017



Image courtesy Bay Island Early Learning and Care

Key stats

- 56 student activities with artists
- 34 students participating
- 80 attendees

Arts Queensland investment

\$12,910 Artists in Residence (AIR) program in 2017-18

The \$200 000 Artist in Residence program, supported through AQ and Education Queensland in 2017-18, aimed to increase engagement with arts and culture through partnerships with artists, arts organisations and arts facilities

Find out more

[Bay Island Early Learning and Care website](#)



Create and play. Image courtesy Bay Island Early Learning and Care

Outcomes

- A positive response and strong engagement developed between children and educators
- The project helped to embed ideologies to promote environmental awareness through sensory and physical interactions.
- Increased interactivity increased student engagement - an interactive water/sand board explored maths/science concepts like measurement, volume, gravity as well as problem solving etc
- Acceptance and acknowledgement by the island arts community. Macleay Island Arts Centre held pottery workshops for the children and educators. The artworks were exhibited at the gallery space as part of the open day at the kindergarten.
- Enthusiasm of the children encouraged families that never/rarely visit the kindergarten to attend events - best participation rate achieved. Families residing over four islands journeyed by ferry/barge/taxi to attend the open day, many for the first time.
- The process of continuous reflection, creative problem solving and project required leadership, teamwork, good communication and flexibility - all of which provided professional and personal growth to participants.
- Heightened engagement of students diagnosed with additional needs and those displaying developmental red flags and/or challenging behaviours.

Learnings and reflections

The children delighted in showing how the interactive boards and instruments work. The spaces excel while the children master self-soothing, with other children suggesting "take a breath & chill in the tepee" or "bang on a drum" when feeling angry. One child explained colour mixing, as depicted on the sensory hopscotch pathway.

Feedback

Great recycling ideas and a very talented painter... good at interacting with the children... great rapport with our additional needs children.... some challenges but overall a good learning experience.

Children are displaying an eagerness to the time and days that our Artist is coming in...a few children in particular are transferring the knowledge and understanding learnt during our project time into other contexts and daily discussions.

"... we took turns to press down on the pipe and roll it through the paint creating a wonderful pattern on the pipes...we used wooden spoons and banged hard, soft, fast and slow, then dragged the spoon down the wire racks to make a beat...problem solve how to pour from one pot down into the next on our Sand Wall - maths and science is so much fun!"

Tips for others

Flexibility in program delivery is essential, likewise team approach to the achievement of project outcomes.

Our experience highlighted that once the project participants and desired outcomes are identified the pathway to achieving those outcomes requires constant reflection and adjustment.

Adherence to ECE setting Regulations and Standards (physical environment) is essential and may not be fully understood by Artists, therefore careful inspection/audit of works created is essential, and collaboration required with ECE setting specialists to ensure compliance - we utilised our Approved Provider to audit designs & physical outcomes and an in-house maintenance team to "finish" and oversee installation of the works produced, which increased the overall cost of the project.

The experience is a learning journey for everyone involved, so enjoy it as it unfolds - change what you can, accept what you can't, reflect, move on and most important, SMILE!

What next?

All the multi-use interactive play spaces produced through the project will be enjoyed by future kindergarten children and educators