



# Case study

## Road to Recovery

### Details

**What:**

The *Road to Recovery*, facilitated by Red Clay Community Theatre was a three-stage theatre-making project commissioned by Goldbridge Rehabilitation Services.

The project aimed to challenge existing perception of addiction and provide an opportunity for participants with alcohol and drug addictions to tell their stories of addiction and recovery through theatre, music and writing.

A series of workshops held over an eight-week period with participants, facilitated by Red Clay in collaboration with local artists was followed by a short four-day residency in the Space Theatre at The Arts Centre Gold Coast.

Workshops cumulated in a showcase presentation *Work in Progress* at The Space, Gold Coast which allowed the audience of 166 members to experience the obstacles and triumphs of the participants' roads to recovery,

**When:**

June to August 2016

**Where:**

The Arts Centre Gold Coast @ "The Space"



Group work. Photo: Bella Pidcock. Image courtesy: Red Clay Community Theatre

**Key stats:**

- 5 locally based artists and cultural workers
- 29 participants
- 166 Audience members

**Investment:**

\$13,400 – Regional Arts Development Fund

*The Regional Arts Development Fund is a partnership between the Queensland Government and the City of Gold Coast Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.*

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## Outcomes

- The project provided participants with a safe, non-judgmental environment to develop hands on experience in production management, publicity, stage management, directing and presenting theatre works.
- Feedback from participants indicated that the project helped build self-esteem and confidence.

*Sharing something so personal was hard, but I'm glad I did.*

*I have combatted a major fear and now have my creative passion restored.*

- The project raised community awareness of the issues associated with addiction.

*Beautiful courageous people, sprinkled with humour allowed for greater understanding of the recovery journey.*

*What brave people - I'm less than one week into recovery and have (sic) been given more hope*

- Red Clay has established strong working relationships with local artists. All artists have declared an interest and availability for future collaborations.
- Several organisations and services have approached Red Clay for future involvement in theatre workshops, team building and performances.



Bella Pidcock of Red Clay Community Theatre. Photo: Elizabeth Lord. Image courtesy: Red Clay Community Theatre

## Learnings and reflections

*This project has opened up understanding that the use of various art forms can build cultural awareness, self-awareness and open up possibilities of services and communities to collaborate together.*

The *Road to Recovery* project has shown the benefits of using the arts in a rehabilitation setting to help participants reflect their story and to build confidence and self-esteem.

*The key is flexibility.*

Bella Pidcock of Red Clay Community Theatre commented that being aware of individual's differences and allowing for flexibility were key for the success of the project. The different life circumstances of participants and fluctuating attendance presented challenges during the project. This meant that conventional theatre making practices were often modified to accommodate the transient and uncertain nature of the group dynamics.

Red Clay had the following hints for anyone else looking to undertake a similar project.

- *Plan to cater for individual differences i.e. consider each member's needs but gradually "train" in group co-operation and sensitivity.*
- *Always try to stress the positive - sometimes hard to find!*
- *Tailor expectations to abilities - to place conventional industry standard product expectations is unrealistic and ultimately soul destroying. As colleagues reminded me. "If you succeed in helping even one person, you have succeeded."*
- *Establish a safe and supportive working environment*
- *Try at all times to offer a non-judgmental model to your participants. There must be flexibility in one's processes.*
- *Allow participants to experience success while accepting the right to "fail".*