

Case study

The Soldier's Wife

Documenting the story that is rarely told, The Soldier's Wife initiative uses song to tell the stories of servicemen's families affected by war.

What

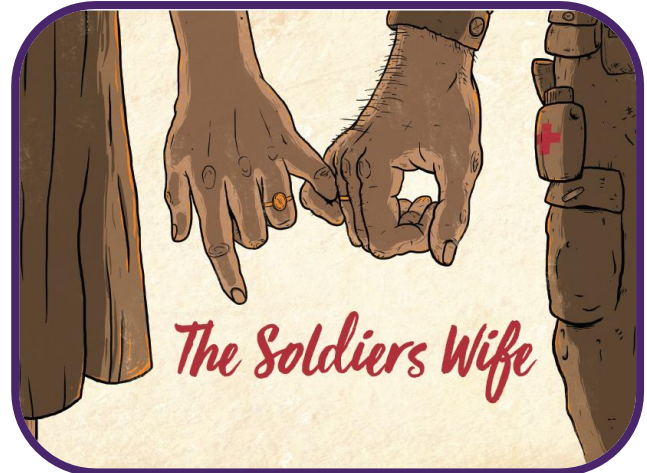
The Soldier's Wife initiative saw a group of female Queensland songwriters come together to turn the stories of the families of Australian servicemen, both past and present, into song.

Launched in 2014, the group of songwriters has met with almost 100 women – aged from 25 to 104 years old – across Queensland. From varying backgrounds and conflicts, the women's stories show similar themes of love and loss, upheaval, fear for their partners, anger and suffering and the impact on their families.

The initiative has raised community awareness of the issues faced by those indirectly involved in conflict as well as providing an outlet for families to talk about their experiences. The group has worked closely with Legacy and the Partners of Veterans Association throughout the project.

The songs have been performed across Australia through performances, radio and social media and a sell-out performance at the Sydney Opera House.

Funding through the Queensland Arts Showcase Program supported the professional recording and marketing of an album and a hard-cover book containing pictures and stories from participants.



The Soldier's Wife album cover. Image courtesy Sugarrush Music

When

October 2016 to March 2017

Where

Brisbane, Townsville and Roma

Key stats

- 12 Queensland artists supported
- almost 100 women participated

Arts Queensland contribution

\$31,900: Queensland Arts Showcase Program – Ignite

Find out more

Deb Suckling

Email: sugarrush@optusnet.com.au

Website: www.soldierswife.com.au

[Soldier's Wife Showreel](#)



Maisie, Laurel Club Brisbane. Image courtesy Sugarrush Music

Outcomes

- The project has generated national and international interest. Artists have received a number of requests to perform, run workshops and present findings from the project. In April 2017, the project was featured at the 14th National Rural Health Conference of more than 1000 delegates to demonstrate how arts can assist health and wellbeing in regional communities.
- Recordings of the song and the associated book provide a legacy item which documents the stories and experiences of soldier's families over the past 60 years from Queensland regional communities.
- Artists developed their community engagement, collaboration skills and networks during their participation in the project.
- Songwriters engaged students from local schools in Townsville and Roma raising awareness in students.

Learnings

"It's a cathartic experience for the songwriter and the person that gets to tell their story," Deb Suckling.

The initiative has assisted with health and wellbeing of participants by providing an opportunity to tell their own story, to meet people in similar circumstances and to raise awareness in the wider community regarding the personal impact and commitment of soldiers' families.

I think it is very important that the wider public get to know about our stories - about our experiences and how these have impacted on our lives. It is so beneficial for all the women involved to feel valued and heard. Townsville participant Suzi Vincent. Suzi lost her husband Tony in 2011 from Metastatic Melanoma originating from his naval service in Vietnam.

Tips for others

We are in constant communication with all the women who have contributed their stories to this project and [are] keeping them up to date on everything that we are doing. This includes keeping all parties up to date on email - social media and also sending through all reviews and feedback we receive on the project. It has been highly work-intensive to ensure all parties who have contributed to the process and the project are briefed all the way through. After all - it is them we are recognising through this project.

What next

There are bookings for the performances across Australia over the next 12 months as well as interest in undertaking the project with more songwriters from different states.