



MEDIA RELEASE

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New Artwork to be Unveiled at Watsonia Library Captivates and Rehabilitates

The beautiful, intricate and surprising new 3D artwork at Watsonia Library to be unveiled on September 29 will adorn the library, but its main purpose has been to help people as part of mental health rehabilitation.

Titled 'Unrestricted Under the Sea', the artwork is the result of project run by NEAMI, which provides community mental health rehabilitation and support services and receives State and Federal funding. The artwork has been 18 months in the making, bringing together people from several community services including NEAMI, Banyule City Council and YPRL.

Local artists Suzi Duncan and Siggy Pfefferle co-ordinated the project. Suzi says she watched the group of five begin as shy strangers and bloom into open committed and talented artists with wonderful ideas, vastly increased confidence and a close-knit bond. "Everyone changed more than any other project I've done. So much so that it's actually blown me away," she said. "One person, was too scared to put a pencil mark on paper in the beginning, but by the end was contributing significant artistic elements."

Suzi adds that the project has had a significant effect on the participants. "It has brought them out of themselves to the point where I feel emotional. It's been very very special."

Participant Jan Hatt is grateful for the project. "It's been a really good opportunity for people who live with a mental illness to show how we can give a valuable contribution to the community with our recoveries ... it's actually been really amazing."

The project has also helped participant Christina McDonald get her movement back after a stroke. "That is why this is so special," she says.

YPRL Manager of Outreach Jane Grace points out that the project is intended to "raise community awareness of mental health issues, give consumers opportunity for skill development, increase their self-confidence and esteem, foster community connectedness, and showcase the talent of the group".

"There is a wonderful sense of excitement and achievement among the artists, and the council and the library service are amazed by the result," Banyule City Council Cultural Services Team Leader Tony Smith adds. "We're very proud to be involved."

This is the second NEAMI project YPRL has been involved in. The first project culminated in



the beautiful wall display of mosaic butterflies at Lalor Library.

The local community is invited to see the artwork unveiled on Tuesday 29 September. The activities will begin with a sea-themed children's storytime at 10.30am. The new underwater 3D mural will be launched and unveiled at 11.00am. Morning tea will follow and children can touch, feel and experience some extraordinary small sea creatures with Seaweed Sally.

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Photographs included

Caption:

Christina McDonald says the project helped her get movement back after a stroke

Caption:

Jan Hatt (left) working on the artwork.

For further information:

Suzanne Male

Marketing & Media Coordinator

Yarra Plenty Regional Library

P 9401 0755 smale@ypri.vic.gov.au

