

SWIMMABLE!

~

Reading the River

*REPORT TO AUSTRALIA COUNCIL
FOR THE ARTS ON WORKSHOP*

Held Wednesday April 10 2013

Montrose Bay Yacht Club, Glenorchy



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This document provides a report back on the *Swimmable! Reading the River* stakeholder workshop that was made possible through Australia Council Creative Partnerships seed funding, which supports the development of arts and non-arts partnerships to enable future projects.

The workshop brought together a wide range of potential partners across science, community, education, industry and the arts, local to the area. These were partners that had expressed interest in being engaged in the design and delivery of community arts and cultural development outcomes in Glenorchy through the *Swimmable!* project proposed to take place at GASP! over the next three years.

Participants were provided with a workshop Primer detailing the project vision and scope, the profiles of other attendees, the context of the funding opportunity with the Australia Council, a detailed agenda for the workshop, and the key questions to explore (the Primer material forms the first half of this document). Participants generously gave their time and energy towards the half-day workshop held at the Montrose Bay Yacht Club on 10 April 2013, with views to the Derwent River, the topic of discussion.

The workshop began with a context setting presentation by Jodi Newcombe, Director of Carbon Arts and workshop facilitator, which sought to demonstrate through case study examples the possibilities for arts, science and community collaborations to engender environmental stewardship and positive social and economic outcomes. With participants divided into three groups, the remainder of the workshop was spent in two group exercises that revealed a common vision and approach to the project's design and delivery.

The closing statements of participants highlight the commitment of all the stakeholder groups to move forward with the project in ways that are both generous and ambitious. The next steps from this engagement will be for Carbon Arts and GASP! to solidify the nature of this engagement through further one-to-one consultation to build a partnership proposal and budget with the Australia Council by July 2013.

Pippa Dickson, GASP! and Jodi Newcombe, Carbon Arts

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BACKGROUND

Swimmable! Reading the River envisions a series of innovative, data-driven artworks developed over 3 years, situated within the Derwent Estuary at the Glenorchy Art & Sculpture Park (GASP!). The project, conceived by GASP! with environmental arts organisation, Carbon Arts, aims to connect the local community and visitors to the health of the aquatic environment, and provide a form of ongoing engagement of the public in stewardship of this natural asset.

SWIMMABLE ~

Elwick Bay was once a popular recreational swimming place. Over time from industrial pollutants the river was proclaimed ‘dead’. Now the water quality is improving but in places along the Derwent River, the water is not yet deemed fit to swim in, especially after rain, with contaminated storm water entering the estuary.

The opportunity to ‘talk’ to these issues was presented during community consultation work for the development of GASP! in 2008, 2009 and 2010. A student from the local college proclaimed that one of the most important aspects of the site was the quality of the water and the ability to swim again.

GASP! aims to be an ‘immersive experience’, a place for imagination, wonder and reverie. Story-telling is integral to this and past and present uses of the site provide a fertile platform to explore possible futures, such as progressing the river to a healthier state in the face of climate change and ongoing human-induced pressures on its ecology.

In this project the focus on making this part of the river ‘*Swimmable!*’ becomes the catch-cry for artists to play a leading role, inspiring environmental restoration.

NAMED AFTER THE CELTIC
WORD ‘CLEAR WATER’
IN 1794, THE DERWENT
IS AN INTEGRAL PART OF
TASMANIA’S CULTURAL,
ECONOMIC AND NATURAL
HERITAGE.

State of the Derwent, year 2012
Report Card



The GASP! Boardwalk (2011) at the Grove Reserve, Elwick Bay

LOCATION



VISION

The project seeks to innovate by piloting environmental data-driven public art as a means for brokering a dialogue between diverse stakeholders on river health. The intention is that the artworks will bring 'legibility' to the complex interplay of values and outcomes associated with use of the river: recreational, industrial and commercial.

Swimmable! Reading the River aims to bring the arts together with science and technology in a collaborative effort to forge a more sustainable future for Glenorchy and the Derwent.

By drawing on the emerging Sense-T network of sensors in Tasmania, the expertise of marine and freshwater scientists, the Derwent Estuary Program's award-winning progress and partnerships, the goodwill of businesses and residents and the educational programs of local school students, the project will generate a data-driven dialogue that – through the leadership of pioneering artists - is imbued with a powerful ambiguity and sense of play.

SCIENCE CAN SKETCH
THE NATURE OF THE
PROBLEM. TECHNOLOGY
CAN FACILITATE
THE SOLUTIONS.
ECONOMICS CAN POINT
OUT THE COSTS AND
THE BENEFITS. ART
ENGAGES THE SOUL.
ART LOOKS LIKE THE
PERFECT ADDITION TO
OUR INSTRUMENTS OF
CHANGE.

Professor Tim Jackson,
University of Surrey



*Elwick Bay (February 1958). Photo
courtesy of Margaret Corrigan*

WORKSHOP

WORKSHOP AIMS ~

The workshop aims to identify shared goals and vision for a collaborative project resulting in arts and environment outcomes at Elwick Bay. The workshop will lead to the development of a proposal for co-funding through the Creative Community Partnerships Initiative at the Australia Council of the Arts. Financial and in kind support will also be sought from partnering organisations, businesses and individuals.

CREATIVE COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIPS INITIATIVE ~

Creative Communities Partnerships support opportunities for Australians to participate in meaningful arts and cultural activities in the places where they live, encouraging innovation and enhancing community wellbeing.

Proposals may include a range of diverse but related activities and are for total amounts between \$50,000 and \$600,000, with a maximum of \$200,000 in any one year. The Community Partnerships Committee requires that applicants demonstrate that at least 50 percent of the budget for the proposed partnership is derived from sources other than the Australia Council.

There are two phases to the Creative Communities Partnerships process:

Phase 1 – discussion and proof of concept -Completed. GASP! concept rated excellent by the Committee

Phase 2 – full written application -Submit June, 2013

GASP! and Carbon Arts have been successful in receiving Australian Council support to progress to Phase 1, and this workshop is about progressing with invited stakeholders to deliver a proposal for the full Phase 2 funding of up to \$600,000.



WORKSHOP AGENDA

8.45: Arrive, Tea/Coffee

9.00-9.05: Welcome and Introduction to the Day: Pippa Dickson, GASP

9.05-9.25: Round table Introductions:
All participants, 1 min each

9.25 – 9.45: Presentation: Art + Data + Environment: Jodi Newcombe, Carbon Arts

9.45-9.50: Introducing Group Exercise 1

9.50-10.05: Questions + short break

**10.05-10.45: Group Exercise 1:
Shared Vision, Opportunities and Challenges**

Breakout into small groups to discuss shared organizational objectives and vision – arts, social, environmental, economic - relative to the Derwent River and local communities. Share past successes in engaging community on environmental issues before identifying key challenges and opportunities for future collaborations through art.

10.45-11.00: Report back by groups

11.00-11.05: Introducing Group Exercise 2

11.05-11.15: Questions + short break

11.15 – 11.45: Group Exercise 2: Preparing Artist Briefs

Based on opportunities and challenges identified in Exercise #1, work in groups to come up with a brief for an invited artist. Define the challenge, identify collaborators and their roles, outline a process and desired outcomes and benefits from each collaborator's perspective. Think about how to present these in order to get buy-in from different organizations.

11.45 - 12: Report back by groups

12-12.15: Summary and Next Steps

12.15: Lunch served

PARTICIPANTS

FACILITATOR ~

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www.carbonarts.org

GASP! ~

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Member

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Curator, writer and GASP! Art Committee
Member

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APOLOGIES~

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KEY QUESTIONS FOR INVESTIGATION

ABOUT PARTNERSHIP...

How can we design an arts commissioning process and arts outcomes that meet the needs and vision of all participating stakeholders?

How can the project contribute to reaching existing goals of partners, such as communication, education, skill and job development and environmental goals. Can we map all of these?

ABOUT WORKING WITH COMMUNITY...

How can the artworks provide feed-back loops to the public to encourage and reward stewardship of the environment? What are the different pathways that this is possible?

What programs or activities have been most successful in engaging school students on water ecology and water quality in Glenorchy?

How can the project empower young people to develop tools and skills in creative communication, technology or software development, data analysis, visual design and science investigation?

ABOUT PROJECT DESIGN...

What is the ideal structure for artist engagement? Can we imagine partnering an artist with a scientist or existing program? Are there specific data sets we want to make available to artists or questions we want to engage artists in investigating?

How do we balance the low-tech and the high tech means of 'reading the river'?

Can we imagine this project as a pilot for arts and science engagement around sustainability that could be taken up in other parts of the country?

ABOUT DATA...

Is any real-time sensor data collected in relation to river health? Is there a case for adding sensors through Sense-T?

What kinds of data can we ask school students and community members to collect in an independent manner on an ongoing basis that can be related back to river health and ecology?

What are the water quality and ecological health indicators of the estuary that we think would be most useful for driving a data-engaged artwork? For example, what could usefully be collected by the public? How would citizen collected data complement officially collected data?

How can we usefully combine regular interval or real-time monitoring with less frequent monitoring reports - and official data and citizen uploaded data - to provide a 'data ecology' that allows for effective story-telling?

ABOUT OUTREACH...

What are some of the diverse ways we can reach audiences beyond GASP! to showcase the results of the project?

How do we measure outcomes from the project?



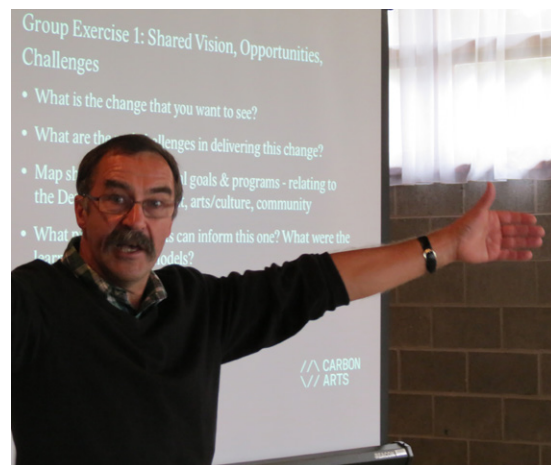
Susan Philipsz, The Waters Twine, 2013. 8 channel sound Installation. Image: Rob Harrison



GROUP EXERCISE 1

SHARED VISION, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES

The group identified a range of economic, social and environmental challenges faced in Glenorchy that they felt the project could help address through its unique arts-based approach. Turned around, these represent opportunities and a collective vision for how the project could both directly and indirectly improve the well-being of local communities.

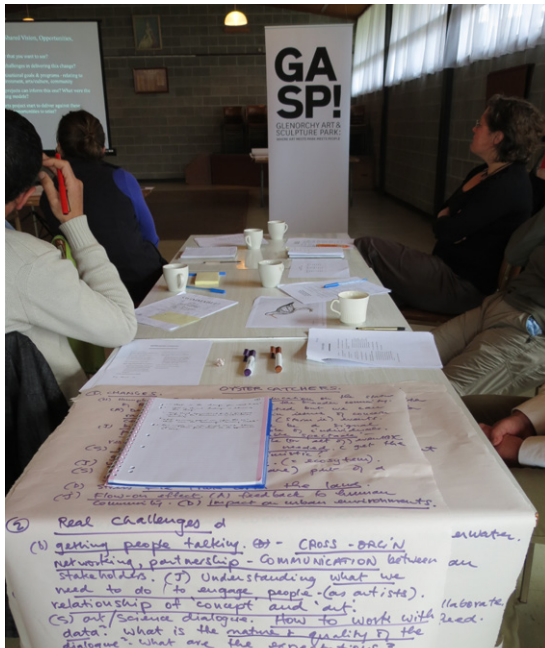


There was a sense that *Swimmable! Reading the River* can help to:

- Challenge misconceptions and perceived stigma about the Derwent, that the river isn't a murky, dead place, but a dynamic estuarine system that is full of life.
- Bring attention to the positive progress the river has made in recent years, from a polluted past, encouraging further clean-up and engendering a sense of pride.
- Celebrate the history of the Derwent and its world-class industry.
- Slow down the 'zoomers', creating a 'slow' art park where people engage on a micro and macro level.
- Challenge an oft-held view in the local community that contemporary art is threatening and not 'for them', through an engaged, participatory arts model.
- Provide unique opportunities for learning, digital literacy and technology skills development through the arts that makes technology and science more accessible to the young, the elderly and different cultural groups.
- Contribute to building a cultural ribbon that connects MONA, GASP! and Hobart around the Derwent foreshore.
- Attract more visitors to the region.

GROUP EXERCISE 1

SHARED VISION, OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES



In order for the project to reach this vision, it was agreed that it needed to:

- Have the 'wow!' factor, i.e. be spectacular, innovative and/or memorable.
- Be globally significant or relevant, thinking laterally about the notion of community in the modern day.
- Be dynamic, like the river itself, providing reasons for people to keep returning to the site.
- Have genuine engagement with the community.

The following outlines existing projects or programs that the various stakeholders in the room were working on that could provide a point of engagement for *Swimmable! Reading the River*, leveraging existing initiatives for arts and community outcomes.

- Wetland building at GASP! and other environmental improvements at site
- Humphrey's Rivulet project (part of the Hobart Urban Rivulet project)
- Blue Carbon and Sea Grass communities (DEP)
- TAS INFORM/ TAS ICT
- Nyrstar's plans for an Eco-industry Arts Park
- UTAS Hacker workshops

GROUP EXERCISE 2

PREPARING ARTIST BRIEFS

The following were identified as being important elements to determine the artist briefs, the direction their work should take, and the opportunities afforded to artists through partnership and resources.

Scope:

- It was felt that the brief should not be too restrictive.
- The artist should have freedom to explore the different opportunities for engagement and use of data. The Brief should be as fluid as a river!
- The project could be one major project over time, involving one or a number of collaborating artists, but a series of sequential projects was seen as highly desirable, giving the ability to address different issues.
- It might be useful to focus attention on a particular zone or story, such as the Humphries Rivulet and the dramatic change to water quality along its course. By ring fencing a particular 'zone', e.g. the Rivulet, the artist can still go very deep in terms of the history, ecology and forces at play.
- Ephemeral or time limited projects would be more effective, e.g. from one day to a year. This provides a way to maintain interest with a series of events happening over time, that continues to draw interest to the site. If it's a permanent work it has to be continually changing.

Themes:

- The works should visualise or represent the underwater environment and use the elements to power the work.
- They should respond to a sense of changing physical nature of the environment (the river, the atmosphere), and the diversity of the aquatic environment (native and introduced species).
- Not just about the river, or the foreshore, it's about the community and the adjacent human populations, which are culturally diverse.
- Community dislocation needs to be addressed.
- Importance of emphasising the historical legacy and the economic rebirth of the region, industry stakeholders. We are already leaders in environmental remediation.
- Importance of science for the state – promoting IMAS as integral to our future.
- Cultural rebirth of the river and valuing the river (what the river means to them), the river as a life force.
- Building pride and connection.

IT'S IMPORTANT TO ALLOW EXPLORATION OF THE WIDE RANGE OF PERSPECTIVES AND SUBJECT MATTER THAT IS AVAILABLE TO ARTISTS IN RESPECT OF THE RIVER'S STORY.

GROUP EXERCISE 2

PREPARING ARTIST BRIEFS

Engagement: working with people and data:

- Artists will need to engage with scientists, educational groups, relying on the expertise and the interpretation of data required by experts.
- Community actively contributing to data capture and make it interactive and educational – not literal, freedom to interpret and inspire.
- Engaging schools, artists working with local artists, celebrating working life as tourism.
- Using DEP, NRM, data capture, community and industry engagement to provide artists with the knowledge they need.



Other requirements:

- The artworks should have tangible and identifiable outcomes and impact.
- Outreach mechanisms and legacy of the project should be considered right from the beginning, to make an impact beyond the site to a global community (e.g. symposium, website, communications channels).
- Need to address the sustainability of the artwork and the materials and resource use of the work itself.
- Idea of encouraging small actions by demonstrating the cumulative effect.

CLOSING COMMENTS

In this part of the workshop each participant was asked *what is the change you want to see and what will you bring to the project?*

Workshop participants were confident and assured of their ongoing involvement in *Swimmable! Reading the River*. Their comments below demonstrate this and overwhelmingly show their support for both improving water quality, engaging the community in new ways and having the best possible art outcomes. The challenge now is to keep the momentum up!

Danielle Warfe

The University of Western Australia

- I want to see the community valuing their river.
- I can help by contributing my passion to how this would work and linking to the Humphries Rivulet project.

Prof Alastair Richardson

Bookend Trust

- I want to see the area and environment valued.
- I can help by working with school kids to achieve that.

Hannah Sadler

Glenorchy City Council

- I want to see community knowledge of their impact on the Rivulet which pops out at GASP.
- I can help through the education process and through the education and promotion at GCC.

Sean Riley

Aquenal

- I want to see the environment valued, through behavioural change.
- I can help by communicating what's underneath the water.

Sean Kelly

GASP!

- I want to see artists engaging with community and a profile of artists within the community. Community's awareness of how artists work.
- I can help to proselytise on behalf of artists and provide opportunities for communities to work with artists.

Stewart Frusher

The University of Tasmania

- I want to see the science/art nexus come together in ways that deliver a meaningful collaboration and engagement. A collaboration outcome that would lead to bigger outcomes.
- I can help by engaging as many people as possible within the science community to be part of it.

Andrea Rumney

Rosetta Primary School

- I would like the community be more conscious of the river and to realise how lucky they are.
- I can help with practical help or resources – with children taking photographs, contributing children's ideas.

CLOSING COMMENTS

Anna Waldmann
GASP!

- I would like to see beautiful art. Seeing it from a certain distance and feeling compelled to come here and see extraordinarily beautiful art that relates to the community and local issues – but also goes beyond it. Create a mapping exercise of where in the world this happens.
- I can help as I know art and artists who would give their time and knowledge.

Kathleen Broderick
NRM South

- I want to see a healthy landscape and people-cape in this area and I want to make sure we don't make people feel like they're stupid, and that we draw on their values and understanding of the river. For people to see how they influence river health. I would like to see a whole of river approach, from the mountains on down, connecting GASP! to a bigger picture.
- I can help by funding high-priority projects. It could be a side-project with an environmental outcome and with an arts outcome. This could be an opportunity to consolidate more information on the river, including DEP's state of the river reports and all sorts of other information, such as an annotated bibliography of data sources that inform how we impact on the river.

Amanda Castray
CSIRO

- I would like to see visualisation of data to assist change of the perception of the river and assisting with education.
- I can help by offering our infrastructure, having access to brain power and that of our partners, and access to funds.

Barbara McGregor
Nyrstar

- I would like to see a diverse cross-section of the community united through a common ambition. I would like to see a sensory, interactive art that celebrates the economic and environmental balance that we need to strike in this area.
- I can help by using my government and industry networks, and the work that we're already doing with our existing projects and funding through a broader model.

Christopher Wren
Qantas

- I would like us to punch above our weight, that doesn't settle for average and be special and unique. Aim as high as MONA has.
- I can help by working with the connections that we've got in the corporate and travel industry. I can support whatever is decided and with the 300 staff we have around the corner to do what we can.

I WOULD LIKE TO SEE A SENSORY, INTERACTIVE
ART THAT CELEBRATES THE ECONOMIC AND
ENVIRONMENTAL BALANCE THAT WE NEED TO STRIKE IN
THIS AREA.

Barbara McGregor Nyrstar

CLOSING COMMENTS

Magdalena Lane
Creative Partnerships

- I would like to see a beautiful outcome somewhere on the site. Beauty with intent and integrity. I would like to see everyone in this room remain engaged and maintain enthusiasm for the project.
- I can help contribute through further connections in industry, government, etc. I can look at how our organisation might incentivise ongoing support by partners, and provide in-kind support. And to help celebrate, advocate, communicate and promote what we're doing with the project.

Jason Whitehead
Derwent Estuary Program

- I would like to see the Derwent Estuary Program continue to explore ways to promote, enhance and restore values of the estuary. I see this as an exciting avenue to take this in a new direction.
- I can help by contributing with data and research we've done to date and contribute to the dialogue to get a good outcome on site.

John Chrispijn
Veolia Environmental Services

- I would like to see a link between the waterfront and the community such as the wetland at Humphrey's. Pursue the wetland interpretation on-site at GASP! to create a better engagement between the community and their environmental management of the site.
- I can help by assisting through grants and in-kind support such as clean-ups.

Christopher Lueg
The University of Tasmania

- I would like different kinds of projects that create different types of engagement with data. Data sets that can be played with, that we can have hack workshops, create different ways of visualizing or engaging with data. Emphasise that we're working with both land and water communities (human and nonhuman). I'd like to see some kind of mapping between what has happened in the water and on land, actually and historically. Create different ways of engaging with data that penetrates the community and a range of different communities. Map what's happening in the water and on the land. We want to be able to offer a different kind of experience for students, to get a reputation for offering a different kind of experience to students – they don't just get a science degree but they get opportunities to engage in a different way.
- I can offer in-kind support through UTAS.

Spencer Woolley
Montrose Bay High School

- I would like the community to say 'Wow – look what we've done!' Either through the re-birthing of the river, or artwork.

I CAN HELP BY ENSURING
MONTROSE BAY HIGH
SCHOOL IS A SIGNIFICANT
AND TRUE PARTICIPANT
THROUGH KIDS COLLECTING
DATA AND MAKING ART.

Spencer Woolley,
Montrose Bay High School

NEXT STEPS

GASP! and Carbon Arts are committed to working together to deliver a Community Partnerships funding proposal to the Australia Council by July 2013. The following outlines next steps in order to achieve this.

1. May 13-23: Consultations.

Follow-up consultations with Workshop stakeholders (including those who were apologies to the Workshop) in order to:

- Consult upon a draft proposal for the project brief
- Agree the project structure and milestones
- Agree the nature and detail of each partner's contribution to the project
- Solicit letters of support and budget approval

Approach artists selected for the project delivery, in order to:

- Consult upon a draft proposal for the project brief
- Agree the nature of their involvement in the project
- Solicit letters of support

2. May 27-30: Draft proposal circulated for comment.

3. 3-14 June: Finalise proposal draft, letters of support signed and submitted, artist EOIs submitted, budget reviewed by external consultant.

4. 24 June: Proposal submitted to Australia Council.

