



CREATIVE THERAPIES PILOT

Castlemaine

From July 2025 to June 2027, the Australian Government is piloting new music and art therapy services for people living with mental health conditions and Murray PHN has been commissioned to pilot a new creative therapies service in Castlemaine.

Who we talked to in the community and what they said

Murray PHN consulted with community stakeholders from April to June 2025 to understand how to design an accessible creative therapies service that meets the needs of the Castlemaine community.

Organisations	Castlemaine Safe Space, STRIDE, Dhelkaya Health, Castlemaine Community House, local art and music therapy businesses, Making Music
Other location visits	Castlemaine Library, The Mill Castlemaine, the old Hospital incubator site, the Etty ST Old Secondary School Site
Focus groups and digital survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five focus groups with a total of 39 participants • 18 respondents to online survey

What the community said

Target population	Need across all ages and groups
Service model	A combination of drop-in groups, closed groups and individual sessions
Location	Accessible community spaces and outreach, outdoor spaces
Referral and eligibility	Informal drop-in and self-referral with no diagnosis needed
Spaces	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe community spaces where people already gather, with breakout and outdoor areas, taking sensory needs into account • Visible displays in support of LGBTQIA+, First Nations and culturally diverse communities
Times	Flexibility, including after hours and weekends
Access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Family and carer/support friendly • Close to trains
Inclusion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Purposefully inclusive of neurodivergent people, LGBTQIA+ community and people with a disability

Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stigma around the terms ‘therapy’, and ‘moderate to severe mental health conditions’. Services could use the words ‘music’, ‘art’, ‘wellbeing’ and ‘health’ to share information • There is a need for clear information about what to expect in the program • It is important for people to understand that they do not need music and art skills to access creative therapy services
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art packs and music equipment made available for home use
Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships with local artists and organisations • Understanding that wellbeing and arts practices are different in different cultural communities
Place-based considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Urgent need for free, accessible services for children and young people living with mental health conditions • Important to raise awareness of creative therapies with GPs • Creative therapists need to be visible at community events and festivals
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The perspectives of First Nations and culturally diverse communities were not strongly represented in this consultation

What’s next – how to access the service and more

Dhelkaya Health

The Dhelkaya Health Creative Arts Therapy Program will provide art therapy for individuals aged 13 to 65 experiencing mental health challenges, living in Mount Alexander and Macedon Ranges shires.

Services include:

- Individual art therapy (six sessions followed by review)
- Six-week closed art therapy groups for adults.

Newcomers or those looking to reconnect with the community can join the program’s open art therapy group.

For more information, call Dhelkaya Health on 03 5471 3555.

Further information

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