



CREATIVE THERAPIES PILOT

Castlemaine, Albury Wodonga and Robinvale

Information for Creative therapists

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

Who we talked to and what they said

In March and April 2025, Murray PHN reached out to ANZACATA and AMTA registered creative therapists in and around the three pilot sites. Creative therapists were invited to share their thoughts about the Creative Therapies Pilot via face-to-face and online focus groups, individual meetings, phone meetings, emails and a digital survey.

<p>Creative therapist focus groups</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Albury Wodonga – One face-to-face focus group with seven attendees in April 2025 • Castlemaine – Two face-to-face/hybrid focus groups with six attendees at each event in May 2025. A number of creative therapists also attended community focus groups • Mildura – One face-to-face focus group with five attendees in April 2025 • Online – One online focus group with three attendees in May 2025
<p>Creative therapist meetings</p>	<p>Five in Castlemaine and two in Albury.</p>
<p>Digital survey</p>	<p>There were 23 survey respondents who identified themselves as creative therapists and/or creative artists.</p>
<p>Findings</p>	<p>Creative therapists see a need for programs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • that prioritise free services to people in the most need who cannot afford to pay for private services • that provide outreach to smaller towns and people who are homebound • that provide support for carers • build participant capacity • where music and art therapists work together • that create a home base for music and art therapy • that provide online services where clinically indicated • that set up groups as a safe space, taking into consideration group size and screening for group readiness • that provide non-invasive data collection processes • that provide a continuum of services from individual sessions through to drop-in/ open studio style programs

Creative therapist preferred employment conditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External, internal and peer supervision provided • Creative therapists are members of multidisciplinary teams, including peer workers • Training and upskilling for effective and safe work in primary mental health services • Working with creative artists from the community • Sustainable workload
Concerns raised by creative therapists	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many creative therapists are exhausted and feel overburdened by ongoing advocacy for their professions • Creative therapists indicated the need for rich data collection throughout the pilot to allow for the potential cohort of people attending creative therapies who are hard to reach. They worried that small but important gains may not be captured by data collection tools • Creative therapists described overwhelming and closed wait lists for services for children and young people • Some concerns that the pilot's creative therapists may have to manage a very high proportion of acute presentations of mental health conditions because there is a marked lack of services • Transport is a significant barrier for many potential participants • Creative therapists expressed a strong sense of both excitement about the opportunities presented by the pilot, alongside a sense of responsibility for making sure it is a success.
Creative Therapy Pilot sites	<p>Albury Wodonga: Gateway Health Child and Family Health Program - art and music therapy for children up to 18 years. For further information, call Gateway Health Wodonga on 02 6022 8888.</p> <p>Castlemaine: Dhelkaya Health – Community Services The Dhelkaya Health Creative Arts Therapy Program will provide art therapy for individuals aged 13 to 65 experiencing mental health challenges who live in Mount Alexander and Macedon Ranges shires. The program will include individual art therapy, a closed art therapy group and an open art therapy group. For further information, call Dhelkaya Health 03 5471 3555.</p> <p>Robinvale: Mallee Family Care For further information, call 03 5023 5966.</p>

Further information

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“It's exciting, but also I feel a bit of pressure because it's such a good opportunity for creative therapists. We really want to nail it and then keep it going.”

- Art therapist from Albury Wodonga