

# Waving Not Drowning

By Maryanne Jaques, Arts Out West

Waving Not Drowning, a project of Arts Out West's Bathurst Arts & Health, has engaged palliative care patients and carers in storytelling which focuses beyond their illnesses on the many positive life journeys they have experienced.

The project began in 2009 with four workshops presented by artists Cate McCarthy and Sarah Parsons, together with Clinical Nurse Consultant James Daley, at Bathurst Health Service's Daffodil Cottage. The workshops explored ways of telling stories through collage and photographs. One participant took photographs that were enlarged and hung in the medical ward. Others created scrapbooks or works that could be displayed and used as starting points for conversations and happy reminiscences with their families.

'I was a participant in the workshop at Daffodil Cottage where we learnt to express ourselves in different ways,' says Judy Plater. 'I chose to tell a story of old friends meeting and chatting with pictures cut from magazines to highlight aspects of our long friendship. I drew on the past and the present with laughs, tears and plans for the future. I'm not artistic so the collage I produced needed of a bit of professional help which was willingly given by Sarah and Cate. I found the workshops enjoyable and valued the opportunity to share my story with others.'

The Waving Not Drowning blogsite at: <http://wavingnotdrowning1.blogspot.com> was developed from the workshops as a way to publish participants' work and provide links to palliative care services and local support groups. The blogsite has continued to connect patients and their families across the region, reducing feelings of isolation.

For more information about the Waving Not Drowning project contact Arts Out West on Ph: 02 6338 4657.



## A fresh take on creative strength

By Kim Goldsmith, Dubbo

Seven years ago an idea to connect up with a few artists I had met through my work as an arts editor and artist became one of the most inspiring events to have happened in my career. It all started with a chance conversation at an exhibition opening, an emailed newsletter titled *Fresh Arts* and a generous offer by Dubbo Regional Gallery. It began with the e-newsletter in October 2003 with 10 artists of like mind and an email address who were keen to stay in touch. By March 2004, we, and several others, were exhibiting our work in a show at Dubbo Regional Gallery under the banner of Fresh Arts.

Word spread and by mid 2004, the group had become Fresh Arts Inc. with about 20 artist members. It was and still is an artist-run initiative – run by artists, for artists, creating our own opportunities to exhibit and develop professional practices. As a collective and via individual members the group has been instrumental in initiating not

only exhibitions but professional development workshops, scholarships and residencies, and providing feedback on regional art strategies. Many of our activities have been supported by Dubbo Regional Gallery and Orana Arts Inc.

In 2008 the collective celebrated five years of creativity with an exhibition involving two-thirds of the artist members in the Main Gallery of the Western Plains Cultural Centre. Over 6000 people came through the gallery during the exhibition period. Fresh Arts 08 was a great example of the richly diverse work generated by artists who choose to live and work in western NSW.

By October our 40 members will be celebrating seven years as a collective with 16 exhibitions behind us. When we first formed I wrote an article about artists on the periphery forming groups to create collective strength. Fresh Arts has proven its strength over the past seven years and has provided peer support to some artists who are now making it on their own. In some cases, their first exhibition experience was a Fresh Arts show. We recently held a Connect+Create day where 15 members came together, some of them new to Fresh Arts, to share ideas, undertake some professional development and to see each other at work. The energy on the day was palpable; so much so, the next event has already turned into a weekend! What better way to celebrate regional creativity! ■

For more on Fresh Arts go to: [www.fresharts.com.au](http://www.fresharts.com.au)