

BLAK PEARL STUDIO: SIX MONTH REPORT

**Prepared by Future Tense
October 2021**

FUTURE TENSE

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Blak Pearl Studio is situated on the unceded country of the Wurundjeri-willam, the custodians of the City of Yarra area, who belonged to the Wurundjeri- balluk clans, part of the larger Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Tribe of the Kulin nation.

The Blak Pearl community and coalition respectfully acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people as traditional custodians of the lands, waterways and skies in the area now known as the City of Yarra. We extend our respects to ancestors, Elders, and to all First Nations people.

Through the program, we express gratitude for our shared connection through place, to the oldest continuing cultures on earth. We acknowledge First Nations' connection to material, creative practice, and epistemologies that have existed for more than 60,000 years. We celebrate the enduring presence, knowledges and resistances of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people

We declare our dedication to the unquantifiable significance of the lives of First Nations people. And promise to work endlessly in solidarity to secure First Nations futures.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Blak Pearl Studio opened its doors the beginning of February 2022 and commenced the first phase of a two year pilot program (run by Future Tense) to test the viability of a creative drop-in space at the Florence Peel Centre for Aboriginal peoples experiencing socio- economic disadvantage and hardship in inner Melbourne. Presently the Studio has established a drop in centre that provides necessities such as space, artistic resources, some material aid, access to support services, and food and drink.

There are four phases in total that are to be implemented over the two-year pilot:



There are six activities that will contribute to these goals:

1. Operating a drop-in studio
2. Delivering facilitated artist workshops
3. Running residential artists programs
4. Producing targeted programming
5. Hosting open studio events, and
6. Staging exhibitions.

These activities will be rolled out in a strategic manner over four phased throughout the two years. The ultimate goal of this project is to test the feasibility of this initiative with a view to establishing it as a permanent service (if proven to be valuable to the community). Additionally the impact of the studio is also monitored and assessed to see if the model could be replicated in other sites across Victoria.

The efficacy of our programs and phases are measured through:

- Attendance numbers for the Studio
- Number of artistic outcomes (artworks) produced
- Engagement with facilitated programs
- Participation of community and Elders in governance of the program

We aim to report on each stage quarterly.

At the beginning of June 2022 Blak Pearl was in the position to review the effectiveness of Phase 1 of the initiative. This report provides an overview of the first six months of the initiative against key objectives and outcomes outlined in the Blak Pearl Project Brief.

The key objectives for Phase 1 were to:

- Run the creative studio drop- in centre between 2-5 days a week, and
- Facilitate use of the space by partners for their programs.

Key outcomes for Phase 1 were to:

- Build engagement and establish regular users of the space
- Build the community advisory group and work on a strategic plan, and
- Build culturally safe connections between studio users and support services

The report presents an overview activities that were undertaken in the first six months, and indicates how we will continue to engage with, maintain, and build on those activities.

2 PHASE 1 – ESTABLISH THE STUDIO

2.1 Aims and outcomes

AIMS FOR PHASE 1

- Consistent weekly attendance figures
- Consistent attendance of individuals
- Assess impacts of access to facilities on artistic practice development through:
 - Production of works to date
 - Obtain feedback from participants about what works and what can be improved

OUTCOMES ACHIEVED

- We saw between 10-15 people attend the studio per week in the first three months. Since the winter cold has set in these figures have dropped to between 5-10 per week
- In addition to Elders involved in governing the studio, we have seen consistent attendance by those 5-10 people attending weekly. We have also seen less frequent attendance from two families and infrequent attendance from five additional people
- Impacts to date:
 - Six artists have been consistently producing a range of artworks, mainly paintings and drawings
 - We have given out over 30 A4 and A3-sized sketch books with pens and textas
 - We are yet to run a session with the community to get advice on the direction of the studio (this is planned for October 31st 2022)

2.2 Overview of undertakings in first six months

The Studio has been operating three days a week since late February. For the first six months we have focussed on:

- Setting up the studio
- Governance, operational protocols and systems
- Building the Studio Team
- Building the Elder Advisory Committee
- Buying artistic materials that suited those attending
- Outreach to the Studio community
- Outreach to link local services
- Outreach to local businesses for local support and connection
- Food Budgets and weekly set lunch menu
- Events, workshops, and Studio hire
- Funding and Sponsorships

Details of the outcomes of each of these elements are outlined below.

2.2.1 SETTING UP THE STUDIO

In February we quickly fitted the studio with storage facilities for artistic materials and lockable storage for precious works and materials; set up the main studio area with tables and chairs; set up the kitchen with fridges, freezers and appliances such as sandwich presses, electric cooker; stocked the cupboards with tea, coffee, dry and tinned foods, and utensils and crockery – most of which has been donated.



One of the rooms at Blak Pearl.

We are finalising the set up of the Office/ IT room and secure storage area. We have received donations of chairs, shelving and IT equipment including:

- 3x donated Laptops
- A Desktop Mac capable of running programs such as Photoshop, and
- Cabinets and stationary

The Office also has a small colour printer and laminator.

The second work room attached to the Kitchen has been used as an eating and gathering area + houses mutual aid stock for the community to take. The mutual aid stock ebbs and flows depending on consistency of donations from partnering businesses. Currently Googdbyes is providing high quality secondhand clothing for the community.

The room is currently utilised as a diining and hang out space. We are hoping to make the following modifications:

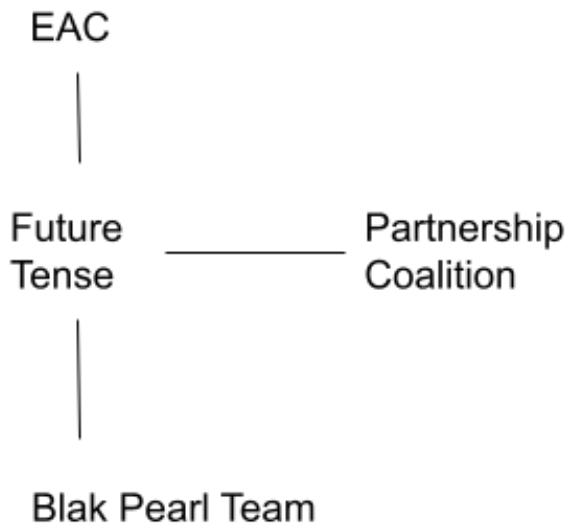
- Install display shelving, and
- Create small library



Another space at the studio.

2.2.2 GOVERNANCE

The Elders Advisory Committee (EAC) guide, and collectively make decisions about Blak Pearl's purpose, focus, and function. Future Tense are implementing the EAC's strategic vision and, in conjunction with the partnership coalition, provide accountability, opportunities, and support. The Blak Pearl team run the studio during business hours.



The meeting schedule moving forward will be:

- EAC – Monthly
- Partners – Quarterly
- Team – Weekly

2.2.3 BUILDING THE STUDIO TEAM

During open hours it is a requirement that two team members be on site at all times. As of May 2022 we had four BP Team members rostered to work as contractors 1-2 days per week.

During this time we:

- Developed a PD outlining BP Team members roles and responsibilities, and
- Held 4 monthly BP Team meetings commencing in March.

After an initial turn over of Team members we have settled into a routine with two ongoing members and Uncle Ringo Terrick supervising the Studio. We are actively looking to add two additional people to the Team roster.

The first six months gave us a strong indication of the scope of skills and backgrounds a BP Team member requires. These include: a familiarity with the community attending the studio, conflict resolution, strong social and facilitation abilities, a depth of artistic and cultural knowledge.

2.2.4 BUILDING THE ELDER ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Uncle Frank (Dootrle) Wandin and Aunty Tracey Briggs are the founding Elders of the Studio. Over the last six months three Elders have joined the Advisory Group: Uncle Ringo Terick, Bo Harding, and James Leslie. There are now five Elders on the board who meet once a month.

We are continuing to seek Elders, mainly women, from the community to join them to oversee the governance of the studio.

During this time we have

- Drafted the Studios Mission Statement and Values.
- Continued to refine and shape the initiative's focus and purpose, and
- Drafted policies and procedures

2.2.5 BUYING ARTISTIC MATERIALS THAT SUITED THOSE ATTENDING

The Studio has received a range of donated items including materials for ceramics, lino printing, screen printing, paints and canvases, craft and sewing supplies. From the start-up funding budget we were able to purchase good quality paints including acrylics, oil paints, gouache, ink and watercolour paints; as well as a base of artistic materials such as wood burners, and drawing materials, jewellery making materials. The site poses physical/ logistical challenges with regards to what items can fit in the studio (e.g a kiln, potters wheels, woodwork tools), and what materials can be handled safely. We are working with local studios in the area to facilitate external workshops in areas such as ceramics and wood work.



Wood burning.



Bead shopping.

2.2.6 OUTREACH TO THE STUDIO COMMUNITY

Outreach has been the most difficult area at present due to the lack of promotional sites or avenues to reach at risk communities. We have partnered with service providers and organisations such as various departments at the City of Yarra, Cohealth (Inner Space), and Neighbourhood Justice Centre who are raising awareness to their clientele. We produced a range of community focussed flyers that have been handed out by BANH Inc.

Our next steps are to work closely with partners to include Blak Pearl flyers into their local mail out deliveries. We will run a community open day and info session this year, link with a wider range of partners such as VAHS and VALS, catch up with current partners to push information through their networks, have the street team put up posters in the area, connect with local businesses to put up flyers in their windows, produce a PSA that will go to air on 3CR.

2.2.7 OUTREACH TO LINK LOCAL SERVICES

Neighbourhood Justice Centre, Inner Space/ Cohealth, and Jobs Victoria are examples of local service providers that are either on board to, or have initiated placing a representative on site regularly to facilitate hands-on assistance to community members.

We are also in the process of establishing a 'no arrest zone' at the studio with the assistance of Natasha Smith at Neighbourhood Justice Network.

Our next steps are to reestablish connections with North Richmond Community Health and to connect with Aboriginal run organisations such as VALS and VAHS to create a link between studio users and services they may need but struggle to connect with.

2.2.8 OUTREACH TO LOCAL BUSINESSES FOR LOCAL SUPPORT AND CONNECTION

Assembly Coffee and Everyday Coffee are two local businesses that have partnered with Blak Pearl. They have both initiated contacting local businesses to raise awareness about the studio, and to seek local support such as ongoing donations or sponsorships.

2.2.9 FOOD BUDGETS AND WEEKLY SET LUNCH MENU

We have allocated a \$500/ week maximum budget for stocking artistic materials and the studio kitchen with essentials - including bread, coffee and tea, sliced meats and cheese, fruit and vegetables/ salad items, juice, and cleaning and storage products.

There are now set lunch menus for each day the studio is open to the public. On Wednesdays the Team cook a roast with vegetables, Thursdays Shop Bao provides a Shepherds Pie, and Friday lunches are provided by Kines Cafe.

Assembly Coffee provide a range of milks weekly.

We are looking for additional food partners to create a secure roster of meal provision, and ongoing donations of fresh fruit, vegetables meats.

2.2.10 EVENTS, WORKSHOPS, AND STUDIO HIRE

The first event at Blak Pearl was held on Sorry Day on the 26th of May. A dinner was provided for the Elders, a fire was lit in the garden, Amos Roach provided music, and Aunty Trish Harrison ran a weaving demonstration.



Sorry Day fire.



Amos Roach performing at Sorry Day event.



Aunty Trish Harrison ran a weaving demonstration.

As of the 23rd of June Aunty Trish commenced weekly weaving demonstrations every Thursday for a month at the studio. We will be recommencing the weaving workshops with Aunty Trish at the beginning of summer 2022.



Weaving working with Aunty Trish.



Weaving.

Blak Pearl held an impromptu kids banner making day on July 3rd for the 2022 NAIDOC march.



Aunty Tracey and participant.



Banners made by kids.

We are now in the process of planning a series of workshops at the studio or, where facilities lack, at partnering studios.

Upcoming workshops include:

- Ceramics at Artful Dodgers (Feb/ March 2023)
- Wood Work at Collingwood Neighbourhood House (ongoing)
- Screenprinting at Blak Pearl with Troppo Prints
- Jewellery making at Blak Pearl (TBC), and
- Iron on Transfers at Blak Pearl with Gammin Threads.

2.2.11 FUNDING AND SPONSORSHIPS

Blak Pearl Studio has received \$44,013 from crowdfunding via Chuffed.org, \$23,077.00 from one campaign via the Australian Cultural Fund platform, and continues to receive ongoing contributions from roughly 10 individuals.

We have also received \$11,000.00 from the City of Yarra's Annual Grants 2022-23 program to run events and workshops.

In June 2022 Blak Pearl received the first instalment of funding from Pay The Rent, who have committed to making \$75,000.00 contributions each year over a three year period.

Crowdfunding has been the most successful avenue to continue to fund the Studio via means that allow programming and the direction of the studio to remain independent of external influence. We will continue to pursue crowdfunding as a primary source of funding with a new two-year campaign via the Australian Cultural Foundation platform - which is a tax deductible contribution avenue. We will also be considering a handful of partnerships with organisations that run invite only community partnership funding programs

3 TRANSITIONING TO PHASE 2 – BUILDING SKILLS AND CREATING OPPORTUNITIES

3.1 Ongoing Operations

- Finalise Studio Set up
- Hold consistent meetings with EAC, partners and Team members
- Continue to build the Studio Team
- Continue to build the Elder Advisory Committee
- Maintain current stock
- Outreach to the studio community
- Outreach to link local services
- Outreach to local businesses for local support and connection
- Food Budgets and weekly set lunch menu
- Events, workshops, and Studio hire
- Funding and Sponsorships

3.2 Expanding Operations

3.2.1 ESTABLISH DEDICATED ARTIST SPACES FOR STUDIO USERS

- ORIGINAL PROPOSITION: Develop the practices of individual users by offering an individualised space
- CURRENT PROPOSITION: Link dedicated studio users with artistic opportunities

3.2.2 SKILLS DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS

- ORIGINAL/ CURRENT PROPOSITION: Monthly artist-led skills workshops focussing on areas requested by studio users to aid the development of their practice

3.3 Key Indicators

- Attendance numbers at each event
- Feedback from participants
- Observations of impact on users' artistic practice

3.4 Other Objectives

- Staff training (First Aid, etc)
- Staff and the coalition will maintain constant updates of facilities, maintain OH&S policy training and updates, and
- A formal risk register will be established and regularly reviewed.

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