



FUTURE HEALTHY

FUTURE RESET: YOUNG PEOPLE MOBILISING ARTS FOR HEALTH, MENTAL WELLBEING AND SOCIAL CONNECTION

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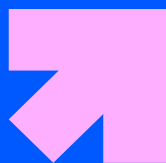
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

From early 2022 to early 2025, in partnership with nine arts organisations, the Future Reset program, funded and coordinated by VicHealth, utilised community-based art projects and activations across 26 locations in Victoria, designed by young creatives in collaboration with young people in their communities (aged 12–25). The aim was to facilitate social connectedness and increase mental health and wellbeing for young people in the context of post-COVID recovery. The broader program adopted a collective impact approach and was guided by the notions of collaboration, relationality, and equity.

This report documents co-learning settings focussed on supporting young creative leads employed by arts and creative organisations to a) build their research skills to document projects, critically reflect on issues and practice, and take part in safe learning communities, and b) co-lead the development and delivery of Future Reset Youth Summits (FRYS). In this report we describe the methods, experiences, and learnings reported by the young creative leads and organisation mentors involved in the co-learning settings designed by the Victoria University team to support their practice of research.

In part one of the report, we describe the methods and reflections on activities and experiences of participation in the co-learning settings and taking on researcher roles. We describe the multimodal methods that were used to encourage young creative leads to reflect on their journeys, as well as the learnings and reflections from young creative leads and mentors. Part two of the report brings in the second mechanism, the Future Reset Youth Summits (FRYSs). The section provides an overview of the role and function of youth summits as a key mechanism for youth leadership and engagement in imagining and enacting cultural change and promoting mental health and wellbeing. The section includes reflections from those who attended, facilitated and participated in the summits and recommendations and learnings for future activation spaces.

These two aspects of the Future Reset project, the co-learning collective and FRYSSs, are pathways for strengthening the capacity of the young creative leads for collective impact. The co-learning settings and summits also embody participatory processes and practice that supports the use of community arts for change. Both settings fostered spaces for amplifying youth creative leaders' voices, resource sharing, the engagement of critical thinking and solidarity. Both settings provided participatory 'contact zones' for critical reflexivity, relationship building and world making. As one of the participants noted: "The settings provided a space of acceptance of who we are as people beyond the categories that govern us in our workplaces". These settings for young people to gather and engage, whilst drawing upon creative vehicles and artistic expression, also helped to foster social connection and enable conversations about mental wellbeing.

This document combines these two aspects of the work to show how multiple partners can come together to support and create empowering research collectives to create knowledge about their praxis for change, beyond the standard outcome focussed evaluation. Instead, the process shows how important it is to support community knowledge production as a vital aspect of the practice of arts for social change. The report presents compelling evidence and recommendations for investment, policy and practice – and highlights the potential of culturally grounded, youth-led arts initiatives to co-create the conditions for good health.



Introduction:

Future Reset is a youth-driven initiative supported by VicHealth, designed to strengthen social connection and belonging, key protective factors for young people's mental wellbeing.

As part of VicHealth's Future Healthy initiative (2021–2025), Future Reset invested in systems that gave young people in Victoria a fair chance at good health. This evaluation examines two key enabling components of the initiative: the co-learning workshops that built young leaders' capability, and the Future Reset Youth Summits (FRYSs), which translated this capability into place-based community engagement.

These activities form part of VicHealth's broader health promotion and prevention approach, which recognises that mental wellbeing is created through strong social ties, community connection, and equitable participation, not solely through clinical services. Future Reset therefore represents a participatory, place-based model for health promotion that centres youth leadership, cultural safety, and creative expression as vehicles for building belonging.

The evaluation adopts a participatory action research approach to document what works in creating enabling environments for young people to connect, lead, and thrive. It provides evidence for how arts-led and culturally grounded approaches can strengthen community infrastructure for health promotion and prevention and inform future policy and investment.

METHODS OVERVIEW:

The evaluation drew on participatory health promotion principles, using creative and reflective methods to understand changes in capability, confidence, and social connection among young participants. Data sources included reflection pads, creative artefacts, video transcripts, field notes, and post-event surveys. Together, these formed a qualitative evidence base that captured both process and outcome learning.

This approach aligns with VicHealth's Evaluation Framework (see: <https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/research-impact/impact-evaluation-framework>), focusing on capability building (as a mechanism of systems change), the creation of culturally safe spaces (as an enabler of health equity), and indicators of social connection and belonging (as protective factors for mental wellbeing). Analysis was undertaken using thematic coding grounded in community psychology and equity frameworks, with an emphasis on identifying enabling conditions for prevention systems rather than program-level attribution, which is a different focus for the investment.

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Part One: Creating Co-Learning Settings with Young Creative Leads



The reflections from the Young Creative Leads and organisational mentors highlighted significant personal and professional growth stemming from their involvement in the program. The key themes derived from their stories and informed by the equity lens that anchor the Future Reset investment and practice strategy.

Sharpening reflexivity: Participants reported a strengthened belief in their own capabilities and their right to be in professional spaces. The experience served as a mirror, deepening their self-awareness and refining their creative vision, planning, and organisational skills. While some noted challenges in forming deep connections within the wider collective, the process was crucial for interrogating what they wanted to achieve.

Belonging through communality: The program fostered a profound sense of connection, reciprocal support, and “consistent togetherness.” For one participant, it revived a deeply rooted sense of community and belonging from their cultural background that is resistant to commodification. The journey helped restore hope and a capacity for connection.

Diverse perspectives and relationships: The young creative leads developed a deeper understanding that the core of community–artist work is figuring out what the community truly needs. The experience helped them overcome imposter syndrome by realising that peers shared such feelings, leading to the formation of lifelong connections. This culminated in a newfound confidence and a readiness to challenge established ways of working and create change.

Burdens of power and coloniality: Critical questioning of power and its functions were a key part of the process of exploring and sharing ideas. This is not easy work. The work is often messy, painful, as it involves making visible our entanglement in relationships of power structured around intersections of race/ gender/sexuality/whiteness, the fragility of alliances, and the need for self-care in doing advocacy and change work.

Mentor reflections on capacity building through collective sharing: This section highlights reflections from the organisational leads and mentors about the impacts and outcomes of the co-learning workshops, and their recommendations to improve and enhance the process and space for youth leadership.

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Part One: Creating Co-Learning Settings with Young Creative Leads



Recommendations

The co-learning workshops were a positive addition to the Future Reset Project as they provided a space for the groups to come together to share, learn and reflect. We provided a workbook and an open process for participants to share and reflect on their work consistent with the commitment to creating safe settings where young people can lead and share power. While this process worked well, some participants offered some suggestions for improvement that all relate to adequately resourcing arts practice.

- **Embed youth voices in institutional frameworks**

Recognise that meaningful youth–community partnerships require time to build trust, reciprocity, and cultural safety. Institutions and funding bodies should embed flexible timelines, iterative processes, and relationship–centred milestones within program design, moving away from short-term or output-driven metrics of success.

- **Strengthen inter–organisational sustainability and governance**

Invest in the long-term sustainability of partnerships between young creative leads, VicHealth, and community partners by establishing formal partnership agreements, co-governance mechanisms, and resource allocations that extend beyond project and evaluation cycles. This supports ongoing professional, artistic, and civic leadership development for emerging youth practitioners.

- **Institutionalise youth-centred and power-sharing practices**

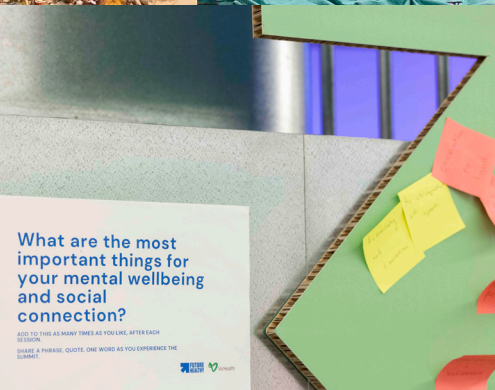
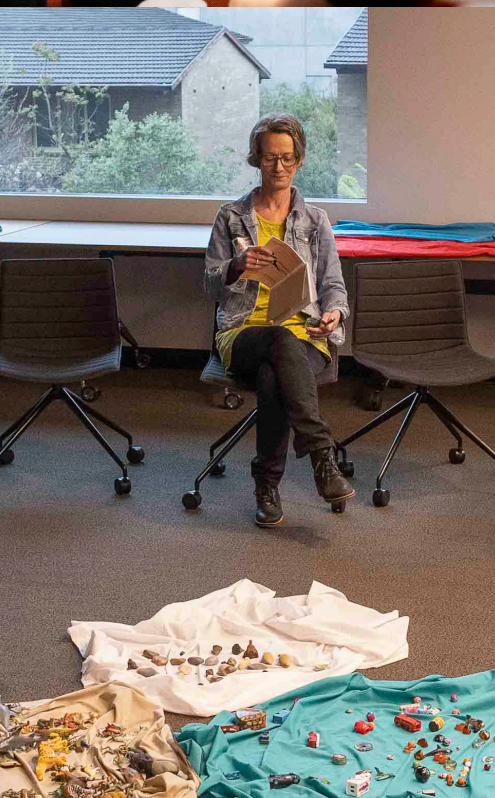
For funders and service providers, ensure that participatory and power-sharing approaches are not confined to individual programs but codified in organisational culture and policy. Physical and procedural infrastructures—such as flexible spaces, breakout areas, and facilitation models—should enable equitable participation, access, and collaborative decision-making.

- **Resource co-learning and community-led knowledge production**

Co-learning environments that centre youth, people of colour, and marginalised communities must be structurally funded within future initiatives. This includes establishing recurring learning labs, youth advisory collectives, and reflective practice spaces as part of organisational strategy rather than ad-hoc project activities.

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Part One: Creating Co-Learning Settings with Young Creative Leads



- **Embed research–practice integration across sectors**

Institutionalise the early involvement of research and evaluation partners (e.g., VicHealth, universities, community organisations) in program planning to promote cross-sector learning ecosystems. This enables knowledge exchange, evidence-building, and co-authored documentation that informs broader systems of policy and practice.

- **Develop shared evaluation frameworks for equity and transformation**

Adopt shared impact indicators across youth and community programs—such as critical awareness of power, sense of community, and collective agency—to assess transformative outcomes. Embedding these indicators within monitoring frameworks strengthens accountability to justice-oriented and relational goals.

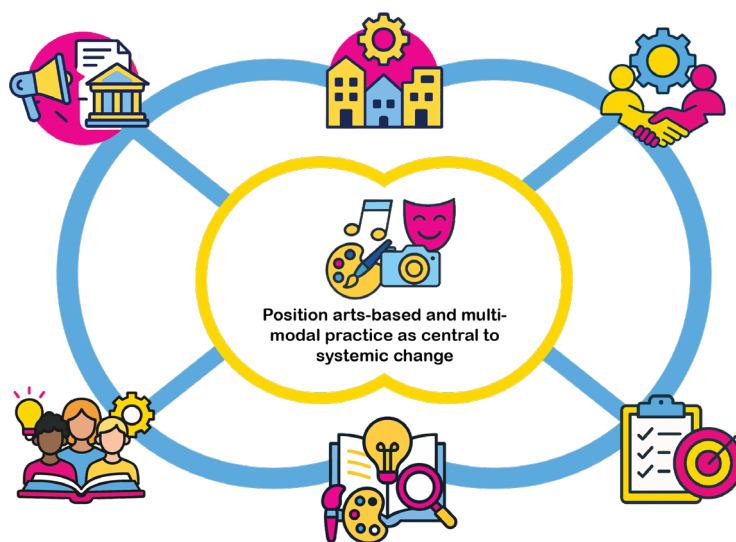
- **Position arts-based and multimodal practice as central to systemic change**

Recognise that arts-informed and multimodal storytelling are not peripheral but **core mechanisms for policy influence, narrative change, and collective health and healing**. Structural funding and institutional endorsement of these methods are vital for sustaining the affective and aesthetic dimensions through which young creative leads generate social transformation.

Embed youth voices
in institutional
frameworks

Strengthen inter-organisational
sustainability and governance

Institutionalise youth-
centred and power-
sharing practices



Resource co-learning
and community-led
knowledge production

Embed research–practice
integration across sectors

Develop shared evaluation
frameworks for equity
and transformation

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Part Two: Future Reset Youth Summits (FRYSs)



The Future Reset Youth Summits (FRYSs) were pivotal in creating youth-centred spaces that fostered creativity, culture, and social connection. The summits successfully enabled:

Youth-led Initiatives and Spaces: By positioning young people as the experts and leaders, the summits were curated by the community, for the community. Participants were provided with financial, emotional, and practical support to design and lead their own safe, inclusive, and welcoming initiatives. Young people were also supported by VicHealth, consultants, facilitators, and mentors who provided them with the capacity to determine the summit focus. This process laid a strong foundation for ongoing community-building and collective action.

Communality and Social Connection: The summits were effective in connecting young people within their existing communities and with new people. Survey results showed that 77.5% of participants felt the summits enabled them to socially connect. These gatherings created meaningful and sociable environments that promoted health and social wellbeing through inclusion and shared experience.

Connection to Culture: The FRYsSs gave powerful mechanisms for young people to connect with and share their own culture, and to learn about others. Activities like workshops and yarning circles improved wellbeing by strengthening identity, fostering a sense of belonging, and empowering communities. This also nurtured a critical consciousness, enabling participants to engage in cultural activism and resistance.

Engagement with Creative Vehicles: The arts were central to the summits, acting as a vehicle for expression, storytelling, and connection. Participants articulated that arts and mental health are intrinsically tied, with creative practice providing a safe platform to explore feelings, build communality, and feel a sense of representation and belonging.

Recommendations

To enhance the success and continue delivering FRYsSs, the following recommendations have been proposed by young participants, facilitators and leaders, focusing on planning, partnerships, and participant engagement:

Participant and Youth Engagement

- **Sustain Relationships:** Invest in the sustainability of relationships between the Youth Steering committee (YSC), who were the group of young people that informed the planning and programming of the summit, and VicHealth beyond the evaluation period, offering opportunities for further professional and artistic development.

OUTCOMES AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Part Two: Future Reset Youth Summits (FRYSs)



- **Expand Youth Opportunities:** VicHealth should consider creating more community engagement roles and expanding its work with emerging artists through initiatives like artist residencies or commissions, not limited to one-off summits.
- **Communicating potential and possibilities:** Conveying clearer intentions and ways of supporting would help young people in organising, implementing and facilitating spaces for themselves.

Partnerships and Representation

- **Partner Communication:** Provide partners with sufficient information early to enable their active support in promotion.
- **Cultural Safety:** Ensure culturally safe and youth friendly practices are central to the experience of all participants, and continue to engage with collectives and organisations that also believe in this way of working.
- **First Nations Leadership:** Maximise First Nations representation and voices across all aspects of planning, delivery, and evaluation.
- **Importance of Research:** Embed research evaluation and research accompaniment as practice early in the process of planning summits to support commitment to documentation and learnings.

Planning and Process

- **Extend Timelines:** Allow a longer lead-in time for the entire process to support deeper relationship-building within the Youth Steering Committee (YSC) before programming begins.
- **Early Role Establishment:** Establish clear working relationships and processes between the Production and Social Media & Communications (SM&C) teams early on.
- **Expert Engagement:** Engage an experienced consultant to recruit and convene the YSC to ensure effective facilitation.
- **Unified Registration:** Use a single, integrated registration system for both in-person and online attendance to streamline the process.
- **Improve Payment Processes:** Implement more accessible and streamlined payment systems for young people, addressing institutional barriers such as superannuation to ensure they feel confident recommending peers for future opportunities.

POLICY OPPORTUNITIES FOR GOVERNMENT AND SECTOR

Future Reset provides clear evidence that youth-led, creative and culturally safe approaches can strengthen social connection and mental wellbeing, two key priorities under Victoria's State Wellbeing Plan (see: <https://www.health.vic.gov.au/mental-health/prevention-and-promotion/wellbeing-strategy>). These findings highlight a set of practical opportunities for government and sector partners to sustain and scale this type of prevention work.

1. Sustain longevity and stability of prevention funding:

Multi-year investment cycles of three to five years allow local partnerships to mature, deepen engagement with young people, and build a stable prevention workforce. Flexible timelines also reduce administrative burden and enable iterative learning, ensuring communities have the time and resources to embed lasting capability and local leadership.

2. Embed youth co-design and evaluation in program design:

Embedding co-design and evaluation from the outset ensures that young people are active partners in shaping health promotion efforts. When youth are involved in governance, design, and reflection, programs gain legitimacy, relevance, and stronger outcomes. Participatory evaluation also builds shared accountability and helps identify what works across diverse communities.

3. Recognise creative and cultural practice as health promotion:

Arts-based and culturally grounded engagement offers a powerful, non-stigmatising way to foster mental wellbeing and belonging. Recognising these approaches as legitimate forms of health promotion ensures creative and cultural practice is resourced and valued alongside traditional prevention methods. This aligns with commitments to cultural safety, inclusion, and the social determinants of health.

4. Strengthen cross-sector collaboration and coordination:

Joined-up planning between health, education, and local government can amplify the reach and sustainability of prevention initiatives. Future Reset demonstrates the value of regional and local partnerships that connect schools, councils, and health agencies. Shared accountability mechanisms and data collection can support a stronger prevention ecosystem across Victoria.

5. Build a youth prevention workforce pathway:

There is a clear opportunity to formalise pathways for trained young leaders to transition into roles across health promotion, community engagement, and local government. Structured internships, residencies, or mentorship programs would ensure the skills and confidence developed through initiatives like Future Reset continue to strengthen Victoria's prevention workforce over the long term.

Together, these policy opportunities signal a shift from short-term, program-based funding to sustained, systems-level investment in prevention. By embedding the lessons of Future Reset into future policy and funding design, government can create a more equitable and participatory prevention system, one that empowers young people to co-create the conditions for good health and wellbeing in their own communities.

GLOSSARY

Concepts central to the practices of participatory methodologies and equity informed research have been included in this report. These concepts capture processes and practices that have been utilised throughout the Future Reset research collective activities. This glossary of terms aims to give context to the language included:

Accompaniment: Accompaniment is a concept that originated in liberation theology and is now used in liberatory psychology to describe a specific approach to research and practice. It calls for researchers to work alongside and in collaboration with marginalised people and communities, rather than positioning themselves as outside experts. This method focuses on creating relationships built on mutual accountability and participation, leading to meaningful, sustainable partnerships and “coalitions of co-intentional solidarity” (Watkins, 2015, p. 362).

Aesthetic Interruption: The process of using creative modalities for counter storytelling and to awaken our senses to fracture taken for granted ways of seeing, doing, and being. Aesthetic of interruption makes the unheard or silenced voices heard by inserting those stories into the public realm (Sajnani, 2010; Watkins & Schulman, 2008).

Epistemic Inclusion: Epistemic inclusion is a practice central to epistemic justice and the decolonial turn, which focuses on inclusive methods of knowledge construction (Malherbe et al., 2017; Sonn et al., 2024). It moves beyond the simple co-production of knowledge by actively valuing the experience, expertise, and wisdom of marginalised communities. This approach positions diverse knowledge holders as experts, ensuring their perspectives are integral to the creation and validation of knowledge (Fricker, 2007).

Coloniality: The coloniality of power (Quijano, 2000) refers to the enduring systems of power that were established through colonialism but that continue to define “culture, labor, intersubjective relations, and knowledge production” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243). Central to colonialism/coloniality was the “codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of ‘race’” (Quijano, 2000, p. 533), establishing power relations of supposed superiority/inferiority, oppressor/oppressed that continue today. Coloniality is maintained “in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience” (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 243).

Community Power: Community power refers to the collective ways in which people can engage with and influence the systems that impact their lives, particularly to change systems that create or perpetuate inequality and oppression (Christens, 2024).

GLOSSARY

Communality: A collective sense of belonging and identity, and mutual care and support (Lugones, 2015).

Critical Consciousness: An in-depth understanding that allows individuals to recognise, perceive and analyse the economic, historical and socio-political forces and structures that influence inequities (Freire, 1972).

Critical Friends/Friendship: In the context of long-term, trusting relationships with community partners, a researcher may act as a critical friend, working collaboratively to shape critical community praxis. This role is founded on critical theorising, reflection, and a shared commitment to social justice. The specific functions of a critical friend include co-creating critical spaces, amplifying values, problematising beliefs and practices, seizing teachable moments, sharing critical frameworks, engaging in action research, and connecting community practice to broader networks and social movements (Evans, 2014).

Cultural Safety: The term cultural safety was originally developed by Maori nurses in Aotearoa/New Zealand. Ramsden (2002) noted that “cultural safety developed from the experience of colonisation and recognizes that the social, historical, political diversity of a culture impacts on their contemporary health experience” (p. 112). Drawing on this earlier work in Aotearoa, Williams (1999) referred to cultural safety as “an environment that is safe for people: where there is no assault, challenge or denial of their identity, of who they are and what they need. It is about shared respect, shared meaning, shared knowledge and experience, of learning, living and working together with dignity and truly listening (Williams, 1999, p. 213).

Multimodality: Multimodality describes the interplay between different modes of communication, such as written text, images, and spoken language. It examines how these various modes are combined in sociocultural ways to create meaning within the communication process (Literat et al., 2018).

Praxis: Praxis is the ongoing cycle of theorising and reflecting on actions and through the process revising efforts to act on the world and transforming it (Montero et al., 2017).

Relationality: Relationality is an approach that places primary importance on our relationships and interdependencies with others. It moves beyond merely building rapport for collaboration and instead represents a significant shift in understanding our responsibilities to one another and the social worlds we inhabit. The intention of relationality is to foster reciprocal, caring, and non-transactional relationships that emerge and strengthen over time through genuine dialogue (Montero et al., 2017; Sonn et al., 2024; Woodland, 2021).

GLOSSARY

Symbolic Violence: Symbolic violence entails non-physical forms of violence that can include the imposition of norms, values, and ideologies by dominant groups onto minoritised groups and involve the internalisation and acceptance of the status quo. (Bourdieu, 1991; Farmer, 2009).

Structural Violence: Structural violence refers to social systems as well as the mechanisms through which they produce and normalise marginalisation, exclusion, and exploitation. It is intricately tied to cultural violence (Galtung, 1990), that is, systematic assaults on the human dignity and self-worth of individuals and communities. Structures can include race, gender, ability, class, and their intersections which produce privilege and dispossession for differently positioned groups. Structural and symbolic violence are central to producing and maintaining inequity and how this enacted through language, policy, practices and affects in everyday health, sports, community and cultural settings (Bourdieu, 1991; Dutta, et al., 2017; Farmer, 2009).

PART ONE:

Creating Co-Learning Settings with Young Creative Leads



Overview

❏ *“We know that the pandemic has brought into clearer view widening global inequalities rooted in intersecting structures of race, class, gender, heteronormativity, and ableism. The burden of these inequalities is reflected in various social, health and economic outcomes as well as people’s sense of belonging, safety, and (in)security in institutions and everyday contexts.”*

❏ *“We developed the Future Reset program to respond to these challenges. It’s part of a growing body of public health initiatives around the world seeking to increase social connectedness and wellbeing more generally through community-based art projects.”*
(VicHealth, 2024)

In partnership with VicHealth and various arts organisations and partners, the Future Reset program utilised youth led community-based art projects to facilitate social connectedness and increased wellbeing for young people across Victoria. As part of this, Future Reset sought to build on and nurture the capacities of young people as change agents, leaders, and community makers to foster social connection and wellbeing through arts, creativity, and culture. This public health initiative was driven by the core goals of centring young people, building networks, strengthening capacities and resources, and addressing structural and symbolic violence that impacts upon young peoples’ mental health and wellbeing. This initiative reflects VicHealth’s commitment to the principles of collaboration, equity, and relationships with partners and community groups to drive change for health equity (VicHealth, 2024).

Complementing and bolstering VicHealth’s Future Reset: Young People Move the Dial on Social Connection through the Arts and Creativity (Future Reset in short), researchers from Victoria University were commissioned to support Young Creative Leads build on and develop their capacities as community engaged researchers to document and reflect on the processes and outcomes of their youth led community arts projects and activations as part of a collective co-learning process. The current project builds on previous work that documented Community-Based Arts Approaches to Foster Social Connectedness and Health Equity (Sonn et al., 2024a). This earlier project included a series of interviews/podcasts and a video-recorded intentional conversation with young creative leads and the development of a literature review (Sonn et al., 2024b). The project supported the young creative leads to reflect on and document the processes and outcomes associated with the implementation of Future Reset place-based arts activations.

Our approach was informed by Critical Participatory Action Research (CPAR) approaches, particularly the notion of research as mutual accompaniment (Watkins, 2019). CPAR is not only a method, but it is a participatory way of doing systematic inquiry and analysis with, for, and by people (Fine & Torre, 2021). Therefore, in CPAR, all players are valued as holding relevant knowledge and experience that needs to be utilised in shaping inquiry and action. Research as accompaniment is a form of community-engaged research that is built on long relationships and commitments to solidarity (Watkins, 2015, 2019). Research accompaniment

takes the form of solidarity praxis and pushes beyond the practice of co-design given its focus on changing relationships, systems, and power structures. This approach to research seeks to be non-hierarchical, generative, relational, and resource-sharing and was central to the design, implementation, and assessment of actions and art activations.

Research accompaniment is committed to epistemic inclusion, that is, it seeks to uplift and value community knowledges as central to addressing social challenges (Sonn et al., 2024). While this approach shares similarities with other methodologies such as communities of care and collaborative action research, Future Reset centred the voices and needs of the young people as they envisioned and enacted their projects, and this also entailed the need to develop and strengthen skills for critical inquiry and documentation.

To do this, the VU team, provided a framework and methods to support the young creative leads capacity for research via the interconnected process of Naming principles, Applying Practices, and Reflecting on Action (see Figure 1.). Within these cycles, skills and capacities were expressed in voice, belonging, agency and identity of young creative leads who were supported to build community power (Christens, 2024), a dynamic and relational process, through arts-based actions and art activations. Social or community power here refers to “... ways that people can collectively engage with and influence the systems that affect their lives, particularly to change systems that create or maintain inequality and oppression” (Christens, 2024, p. 1).

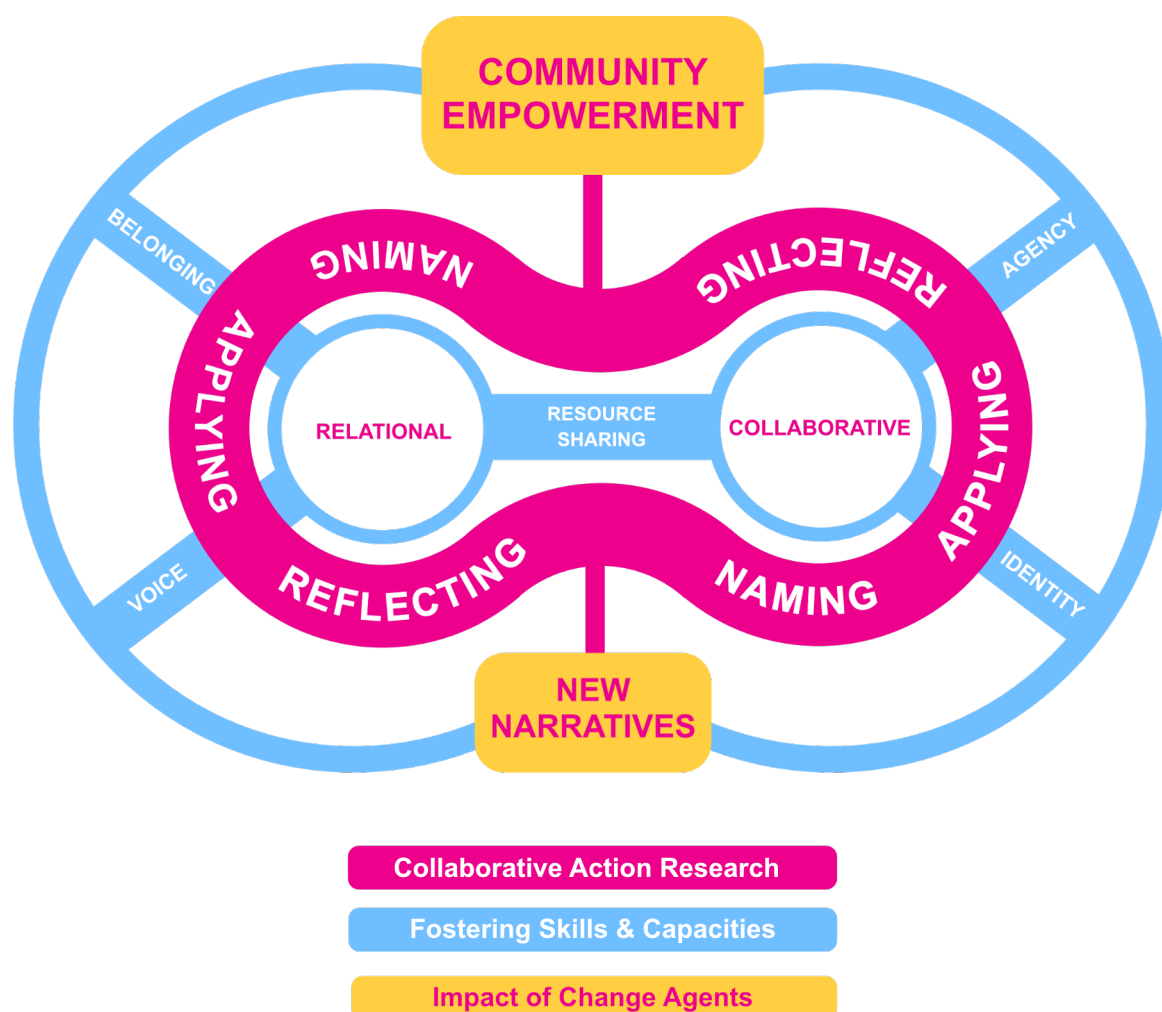


Figure 1. Research as accompaniment: Strengthening skills

Accompanying practices: Workshops and Methods

It was vitally important to support the young people to successfully implement their projects, to document the processes and outcomes, and to describe the important relational aspects of their work across the phases of Naming, Applying and Reflecting.

To do this the VU team supported them through workshops, resources, and consultations aimed at strengthening their knowledge and skills in qualitative research methods and approaches. The various activities undertaken as part of creating co-learning settings are outlined in Table 1 below:

Table 1 – Research as Accompaniment/Capacity Building Activities

Timeframe	Activity	Aim/Purpose	Outcomes/Outputs
12 Sept 23 (Full day)	Workshop 1	- to get to know each other's projects, - to set a context for co-learning - to share knowledge and skills about relational methodologies and methods. - Introduce the literature review: Decolonising and critical approaches to community arts: Centering relationality, community and power.	Participants gained an understanding of each other's projects and established a foundation for co-learning. Collectively explored orientations, ethics, and assumptions, as well as our theories of change and mechanisms of transformative practice (and an equity lens) in place-based art and community making.
12 Oct 23	Workshop 2 with special guest Assistant Professor Jesica Fernández (Santa Clara University, Department of Ethnic Studies) (Zoom)	Introduce and explore various qualitative approaches, including visual and other methods of documentation and data gathering.	

14 Feb 24	Workshop 3 with special guest Distinguished Professor Michelle Fine (City University New York) (In person and zoom)	- For young creative leads to share their research and evaluation questions and findings on accountability, equity, insights, and critical conversations. - Capture these reflections through short videos	- Rosie Kalina (Yirramboi) and Kevin Kapeke (VicHealth) discuss the collaborative workshops and process of Future Reset: https://youtu.be/RHZRh9XWG8?si=EVBSp1r_jeVI52IL - Nickila De Silva (Next Wave) and Kevin Kapeke (VicHealth) discuss the collaborative workshops and process of Future Reset: https://youtu.be/8DPwBJWiPOo?si=sZc8ivnlauQPHci8 - Paris (Mildura Arts) and Kevin (VicHealth) discuss issues of access and value of coming together in workshops: https://youtu.be/URDRJCqLrco
22 Oct 2024	Collective Evaluation Reflection and Creative Response Discussion	To create a space for young creative leads and mentors to reflect on their experiences as part of Future Reset	Creation of Padlet and Response template with support from Arts Access.
Sept 23 – May 25	Team consultations	To provide support to teams to self-document processes and outcomes	Template and ongoing support via email, telephone and zoom meetings with Individual Orgs and creative leads
June 25	Report writing	To develop a report documenting the processes and outcomes associated with the co-learning workshops and the Future Reset Summits and recommendations based on these learnings.	Report on workshops and young creative leads stories

Methods for documenting young creative leads stories of creating community power

The accompaniment process involved workshops, reflection sessions, and presentations to the young creative leads and the mentors from the arts organisations in addition to formal support provided by the VicHealth team. At certain points in the process, we invited participants to offer reflections that were recorded (see Table 1). Consistent with the Future Reset's commitment to equity, epistemic inclusion, and youth-lead community building, the VU team also hosted a final reflection session with the collective.

From this session we created opportunities to ensure that the young creative leads can share their stories. This included creating a Padlet to

invite responses from the young creative leads about their respective journeys through their respective projects. The questions that guided the responses included a focus on the meanings and experiences of the young people in relation to specific concepts that informed Future Reset, which was set up as a vehicle to build capacities for enhancing community power. To help gain insight based on young creative leads journeys of using arts and arts practice to create and enact community power within the context of Future Reset and the supported Projects, young creative leads were asked questions relating to being a change agent, identities, belonging and voice. The specific questions for each concept are noted below.

BEING A CHANGE AGENT

What are the ways your project and being a part of Future Reset has changed how you see your ability to influence and change things? How has it impacted the way you see your ability to handle a range of situations?

BELONGING

What has it been like to connect with the young creative leads through Future Reset? How has being a part of a collective impacted your project and you?

IDENTITIES

What are the ways you have been able to see yourself in your project? How has belonging to Future Reset and your project enabled you to expand or explore ways of being?

VOICE

During Future Reset and your project, how have you been heard? How is your voice represented in the work you have done?

Based on discussions with young creative leads we created a template to assist with the reflections and emphasised that they could use multiple modalities to document their journeys, reflections, and experiences. As noted by Literat et al. (2018) multimodality "is valuable because of its potential for more comprehensive and inclusive inquiries, analyses, and representations that can be socially, culturally and politically transformative" (p. 569) and it offers a way to "contribute to the "making of more inclusive, equitable worlds" and "for challenging hegemonic conceptions regarding legitimate modes of scholarly inquiry, analysis and representation" (p. 566).

In the context of this project, arts practices are often multimodal, relational, and there is a concern with both process and outcomes of cultural practice. Through multiple modes of arts practice people can create and share semiotic resources for making meaning about experiences of Future Reset. Given the focus of the research as accompaniment practice, our focus was to invite the young creative leads to use their desired modes of expression to represent their story and for us to understand the skills and capacities that they build through the journey. Participants were given the space to intentionally share their own, specific reflections

through mind maps with accompanying audio explanation, short videos, poems, scrapbook style with accompanying photographs and short reflections, and other written reflections.

In the following section we use the responses from the young creative leads to convey the meanings for them of the Future Reset program. Within their reflections, they communicated tension, challenges, as well as joy and awakening. They noted the development of new skills and new ways of understanding their voice, agency, and capacity to build community power. A key output of the process is captured in the deepened understanding of the processual

nature of relationships, a sense of communality and care. This reflects a more nuanced understanding of the networks and dynamics of power that shape the possibilities of and for their work as well as their subjectivities as change agents. It also illustrates what Baker et al., (2020) described as “aesthetic interruption”, the way in which dominant narratives and established ways of knowing can be disrupted through community arts and cultural practices, creating space for alternative voices and experiences that open up new possibilities and perspectives (Baker et al., 2020; Watkins & Shulman, 2008).

Perspectives and Experiences of the Young Creative Leads in Future Reset

“ OUR WORK HAS SET A PRECEDENT, NOT JUST FOR WHAT IS POSSIBLE BUT FOR WHAT MUST BE DONE. WE ARE REWRITING THE NARRATIVE, AND WITH EACH STEP, WE COME CLOSER TO A WORLD WHERE OUR VOICES ARE NO LONGER JUST HEARD BUT CELEBRATED. AS WE CREATE, AS WE LEAD, AS WE ADVOCATE, WE ARE NOT SIMPLY MAKING ART – WE ARE BUILDING WORLDS. ”

Geskeva Komba

In this section, we represent some of the young creative leads’ stories, organised into themes that reflect their experiences and the perceived impacts of the co-learning workshops and Future Reset overall for the young creative leads. The information used include the written and video documentation provided by young creative leads, project reports submitted to VicHealth, and project team field notes. The information was analysed using the community power framework presented in Figure 1 and the concepts in the report on decolonial and critical approaches to community arts (Sonn et al., 2023). This is a concept driven thematic organisation of the stories and it considers the questions that were provided to guide the reflections of the young creative leads. The organisation is also informed by the VU teams experiences and insights gained through accompanying the work.

The five mechanisms described are:

- Sharpening Reflexivity,
- Belonging through communality,
- Diverse perspectives and relationships,
- Burdens of power and coloniality,
- Capacity Building through collective sharing.

Sharpening Reflexivity

In a story to a Future Self, Bailey, writes:

➤ *If there's one thing I received from this experience, it's proof that I can do this. That I deserve to be in the room. That I can support others while building something for myself, too.*

I don't know where you are now, what you're making, or who you're helping. But I hope you've kept this energy alive. I hope you still look around and realize that you belong here. And I hope, more than anything, you're still giving things a f go.*

Another young creative lead uses a mind map with a conversational reflection of their experiences with Next Wave.

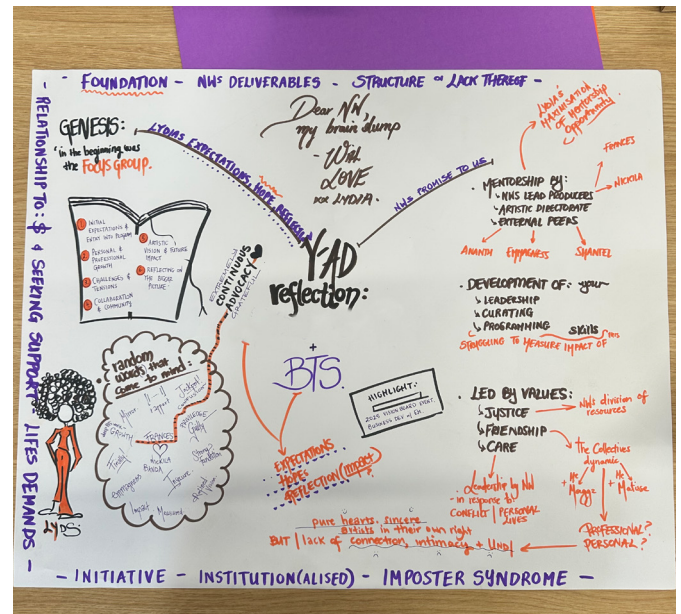


Figure 2. Young Creative Lead's Reflection Map

Through the analysis of the mind map, they speak of how being selected for the program without applying, felt encouraging after previous rejections. Loretta, states:

 *How did I feel when I heard that I had been selected for a programme that I didn't apply for? Especially off the back of having applied for things and being rejected... it was really, really encouraging. It was also encouraging 'cause it seemed to be a direct response to the focus group sessions and the things that were spoken about in that session.*

The experience with one organisation served as a “mirror,” revealing her working habits, relationship to money, and areas for growth, such as administration and adapting to institutional processes. She reflected on how the journey with the organisation has refined her vision, improved her planning and organisational skills, and provided valuable templates and resources. Specifically, she spoke of how it deepened her self-awareness, leadership, and curatorial skills.

In terms of challenges and critiques, the young creative lead spoke about their expectations around connecting, and how the reality of the space was different to what she envisioned.

“But what I found super interesting about this particular opportunity and experience is that more than ever, like literally more than ever for some reason I experienced the least amount of connection or intimacy or mutual understanding between the collective members...”

...these are people who I see like as sincere people, you know, with pure hearts and pure intentions, for for their life and their art and their craft and what they're doing... But I think I just realise that, you know, when you come, when it comes to the arts world and different disciplines, you really are going to find all sorts of people...

This experience reflects how Black Indigenous and People of Colour do not automatically constitute a collective, but how making community takes trust, time, and the fostering of merging as well as divergent standpoints and creative intentions (Forsyth, 2021). Despite these reflections, they also spoke of how being part of the Next Wave initiative has refined their vision and goals for the future, Loretta conveys:

❏ *I would say that I have a refined vision now, so that's that's sort of the impact as well. Like when I'm looking back at that random words that come to mind, refined vision is in there. And I think that through this process, it's allowed me to really interrogate what is it that I really want to do and don't I want to do. And now what is it that is achievable. To do within a certain time frame and the resources that you have, and I think that Next Wave has allowed me to ask really good questions and really help me in terms of it's really developed my way of thinking around these things...*

In addition, this experience has shaped their leadership, curating and programming skills.

❏ *In terms of leadership, yeah, because it's really revealed to me what type of individual I am and hence leader to myself. That I am and also the way that I interact with Community institution where I'm comfortable*

This shows how the young creative leads spoke of being individuals with distinct ideas and needs within the process.

Belonging through communality

The way the process enabled a sense of belonging and communality was shared through the young creative leads stories. One spoke of how through the program and the launch of their project (nexus), which aimed to make movement and embodiment more accessible, they found a renewed sense of connection. The regular gatherings and mutual support through the process also reminded them of the implicit, deeply-rooted sense of community, belonging and communality from their hometown in Southwest China— a presence that is invaluable and resistant to commodification. Mazna, states:

❏ *The journey of building (nexus) has been extremely nourishing, I didn't realise how much I had missed the feeling of consistent togetherness and reciprocal support from the grassroots community: we gather every week and everyone shows up to receive, give, dream, laugh whilst deeply listening and holding one another. This is the community I have missed from my culture, from my beautiful hometown in Southwest China: in my city the understanding of community is implicit, and everyone is born with it in our blood, lives and breathes it in our everyday life. This presence of community that can't be acquired by any amount of material goods, or infiltrated by capitalism – it is truly priceless.*

They describe a journey through hardship toward a renewed capacity for love and connection, ending with gratitude for the experience and the community that helped restore their hope and openness.

❏ *there was a point in life that I wondered*

❏ *whether i'd ever find love*

❏ *the kind of love that -----
----- makes my chest expands*

❏ *because there is so much to give*

Another shared the following:

■ *"I realise how blessed I am to belong to a community in the arts, everyone knows everyone. This is my community committed to growth, committed to changing the world".*

In sharing this, the young creative leads made suggestions for how further connections could be fostered. For example, one suggested that leadership structures and support could be improved, especially in terms of cultural understanding and consistent mentorship

from people of colour navigating tensions and fragility without flattening difference. They did this by posing questions around how we can effectively handle conflicts and differences within community leadership, as well as how we can facilitate meaningful intergenerational conversations—while recognising the unique nuances of leadership in socio-cultural, arts, and broader community contexts. These questions are shown in the image in Figure 3 below, taken from the presentation of reflections from this young creative lead, which was discussed as part of the final reflection session.

• Leadership

- What are the parameters of programming? While I am grateful to be invited to partake, I wonder if there are different modalities of programming that effectively prioritise relationship-building within the program and ways to sustain it, while delivering other outcomes?
- Future leaders are the pillar of change - what are the ways to facilitate intergenerational conversations around leadership, whilst touching on nuances of different areas of leaderships in socio-cultural / arts / community context?
- What does diversity actually look like in programs as such? While the [organisation] team has been incredibly supportive and generous with their time and resources to support the Y-AD cohort, sometimes the cultural nuances in this context could be received and nurtured more comprehensively with the presence of a people of colour leader who is more consistently available to the Y-AD cohort
- How do we navigate conflicts / frictions / differences in the context of community leadership? While it is crucial to hold space for different voices - who are the ones that are expected to hold space and what are the next steps after conflicts? Is resolution always necessary? Who are we resolving the conflicts for?

Figure 3. Young Creative Lead's Reflections

Diverse perspectives and relationships

Matilda, a young creative lead, spoke of how doing work within and alongside community was at the heart of community-artist work. They spoke of the documentary film they produced, the events they put on that revolved around food and breaking bread with community, and how these enabled people to come together and enabled people to "feel". Matilda conveys:

■ *I look back now and laugh. Turns out, the most important skill you need to be an artist, a true community artist, isn't figuring out excel, or how to dissect a contract, it's figuring out human beings and dissecting what your community needs.*

They spoke about feeling "forever changed" and noted that they have "made lifelong friends and connections". They also spoke about being accountable to community and oneself, and

how through the program and the relationships within it, they realised that many of their feelings and experiences in such spaces were shared:

■ *As a producer, and as an artist working with people has become my job, and working with people is HARD! Managing your own emotions can be difficult when your heart is so in something, so adding other people to the mix feels, at times, impossible. But when you get it right, it's the best feeling in the whole world. This program has given me access to a world that, honestly, I didn't think I'd ever be good enough to be in! I had a lot of imposter syndrome, until I realised that everyone else did too.*

Another reflected on community mobilisation and capacity building as slow work and the importance of shared motivation and shared vision (Figure 4.).

Another young creative lead, Stella, responds to the Future Reset Program through a piece titled "Where I've Been Is Mine, But Forward I Go".

❏ *"Through this piece, I explore the tension between exhaustion and renewal, between the weight of past experiences and the forward momentum of growth. It is both a reclamation of where I have been and a commitment to what lies ahead. The young creatives I have had the privilege to work with have been my greatest teachers—reminding me of the joy, resilience, and boundless possibility that exists when we create together. This is a story of re-learning to lead with care, to rebuild with intention, and to step forward with purpose."*

In this, they speak of how coming together as creatives expands possibilities, reflecting how fostering skills and capacities took place in the process of Future Reset, and how this can lead to community empowerment and the forging of new narratives.

❏ *"And here I am again, back at the start – on a ledge, to see what comes next. But this part, this is the best part. Two years have passed, now healed and whole. Tears not enough to show, all the gratitude and lessons learnt, and kindness that Healed I am scared, yes, to leave these people behind. But it's not behind, and it's not the start. I have leapt before and grown more and more than I thought. I am a force to be reckoned with; I am a force to be matched. I learn from the young ones – they taught me so much more. I bring with me the why not, how come, but we don't have to do that. No longer sore, a stranger in my bones. I'll step in, full light, ready to be seen".*

This excerpt captures the confidence developed by the young creative leads through the work, including to ask critical questions that challenge the status quo. The excerpt reflects how young people as change agents activate new ways of working, questioning, and creating.

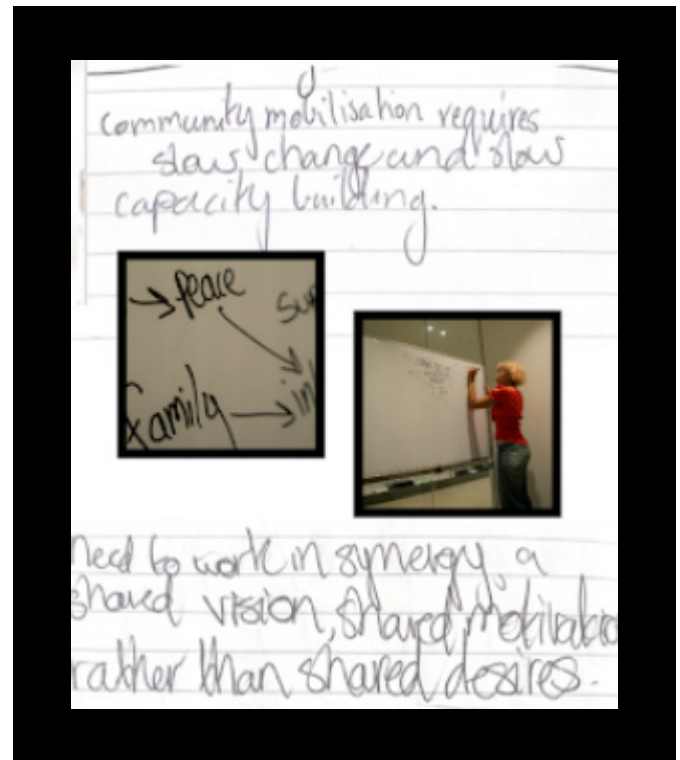


Figure 4. Community capacity building as slow work

Burdens of power and coloniality

Critical questioning of power and its functions were a key part of the process of exploring and sharing ideas. This is not easy work. The work is often messy, painful, as it involves making visible our entanglement in relationships of power structured around intersections of race/gender/sexuality/whiteness, the fragility of alliances, and the need for self-care in doing advocacy and change work.

Some comments from four young creative leads show this:

- ✦ *"What burdens can I carry, what wheel is within my control. How do you work in and with the shiny new spaces, the whiteness of spaces and what are the responsibilities of organisations to steward spaces towards inclusion and away from violence."*
- ✦ *"We are still undoing the damage that arts had done previously."*
- ✦ *"Bringing down those big, dreamy ideas. How do you connecting practical skill building to enact the creative ideas of young people."*
- ✦ *"Everyday day is a collection of ongoing research of 600000 years."*
- ✦ *"This project showed me that leadership doesn't have to fit a mould—it can be messy, imperfect, and still transformative. It taught me that advocating for myself and others isn't just a right, but a responsibility, and that creativity is a powerful tool for systemic change."*

One young creative lead referred to 'outboxing':

- ✦ *"How do we outbox ourselves ... I got the term outboxing from a battle I entered in Berlin, and the battle was called outbox me. At the time it didn't really click for me, but somehow it just lingered in my system. ... In society where we live there are norms, the rules, and ... i have been thinking that we are putting ourselves into those boxes , we are putting restrictions and constraints within us ... I want to become more aware and honest about restrictions we put on ourselves and outbox myself"*

Capacity Building through collective sharing: Mentor Reflections

This section showcases reflections from the organisational leads and mentors about the impacts and outcomes of the capacity building workshops, and their recommendations to improve and enhance the process and space. The organisational leads spoke of how the workshops enabled the building of connections and networks between the arts organisations and the sharing of knowledge. One of the leads from Next Wave states:

- ✦ *"Participating in the capacity-building workshops as a collective of nine arts organisations has been incredibly valuable—an opportunity that is rarely available and often difficult to prioritise as a sector."*

They also stated that building capacity through training was useful and had impact on program design. The partnership with VU and the Future Reset Collective was said to facilitate valuable connections and capacity-building across various practice areas, notably accessibility and venue challenges. Flexible program delivery fostered trust, supported youth engagement—particularly with culturally diverse groups—and enabled effective co-design. The program's long-term funding attracted additional grants and in-kind support, strengthening project outcomes. Collaborations within the Collective extended benefits to other programs, and support from VU significantly contributed to building community connections. Multicultural Arts Victoria, one of the organisations involved stated:

- ✦ *"Our experience working with the Future Reset Collective was exceptional. It was a community of practice that really delivered solidarity, deep thinking and mutual support, and feels like a sustainable, deeply felt connection. Community leaders, particularly in the schools our projects connected with, were very supportive and keen to continue; including accessing additional funding for some workshops, hands-on involvement when required, and providing positive feedback to the young people running and participating in the program."*

This was also captured in one of the young creative leads reflections in the image below (Figure 5).

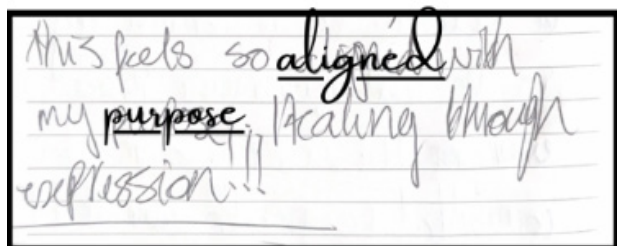


Figure 5. Healing through expression

Further engagement with organisations was spoken about (see conversation with Mildura Arts <https://youtu.be/URDRJCqLrco>). Artist Collectives conveyed that they developed strong trust in young creative leads, leading to positive experiences, expanded relationships with new artists, and increased engagement with organisation's programs and workshops. Ideas were also proposed for the co-learning workshops, particularly around connecting and collaborating more closely and ways to implement this. An organisational lead from The Push, an Australian youth music organisation and registered charity, conveys:

- ❑ *I would like to see closer collaboration and connection with the organisations. Ideally this could take the form of a written/ documented platform where everyone can have open conversations around how their program is going, and what events or opportunities are upcoming, or what areas they may need help on.*

In terms of improvements, many organisational leads stated that sessions were interesting and critical, however access challenges were encountered. Furthermore, organisational leads spoke of how the sessions didn't keep to time, which left as little time for the practical activities. This was conveyed by both Arts Access and Regional Arts Victoria. Suggestions were made to combat this.

- ❑ *A big challenge is that the sessions often felt like there wasn't allocated enough time for updates in addition to learning. Elements of learning and connection always felt rushed. Sessions with guests might have been better spread across two days, one with everyone and one with just the YCL's. More YCL sessions which were targeted at sharing knowledge, resources, or co-programming work.*

Other suggestions from the organisational leads included more informal moments for gathering, such as over lunches or dinners. Scheduling these workshops at appropriate times was also discussed by Next Wave:

- ❑ *During busy delivery periods, committing time to these workshops—particularly when they are on-site and run for half days—can be challenging. It would be beneficial to explore ways to better share resources and training opportunities across our organisations and to amplify or extend existing capacity-building efforts.*

Testimonials

The following testimonial has been included to illustrate the journey of Future Reset from the voice and perspective of a young creative lead and their journey through the work. It highlights the defining moments for them in being part of the collective and contextualises ways in which Future Reset can continue and strengthen in the future:

“Future Reset gave me the ability to see myself within a greater system, and to witness change from beyond my own mind and in the context of global cultural development. The ‘A Rising Tide’ program was designed to engage four different areas within Victoria – this meant that the project had to bridge local and hyper-local interests. The YCL network was critical to unveiling the tensions that naturally arise when operating between two different spaces.

Before embarking upon my Future Reset journey, I dropped out of university due to a debilitating amount of political angst (I was in my first year when COVID-19 lockdowns began). The only hope I saw for my future was one where I dreamt of removing myself from the system entirely. However, this changed once I joined Future Reset and later entered the room with Michelle Fine – a researcher engaged to deliver a workshop for the Future Reset co-hort. She shared her lived experience of working within a system, to change it – For her, this looked like delivering a participatory research project within a college-in-prison

program for women, in a maximum-security prison. Her workshop gifted me the imperative of challenging the existing system, rather than creating a brand new one. With the support of Young Creative Leads and Future Reset leads – I gained a deeper understanding of my own biases, beliefs, and understanding of the work I was doing. Together we identified shared pressure points across the plethora of initiatives we were delivering.

If Future Reset was 6 months – instead of 18 months – I would not have developed such a ferocious capacity to sit with the discomfort of being in a liminal space. At the time, there was a constant ebb and flow of challenges and wins. Looking back, it was clearly a series of steps leading upwards. ‘A Rising Tide’ transformed from its inception to delivery. Notably, the intention of the project – to develop leadership and curatorial skills amongst early career artists, to foster greater social connection and wellbeing – was achieved.”



Summary

Research accompaniment and capacity building supported the young creative leads to use research practice including critical reflexivity to question and document their work. All projects provide evidence of how the collectives were able to document and deepen the analysis of the process and impact of their practice and activations. The reflections from the young creative leads and mentors highlighted significant personal and professional growth stemming from their involvement in the program. The key themes that emerged from their stories were:

- **Sharpening Reflexivity:** Participants reported a strengthened belief in their own capabilities and their right to be in professional spaces.
- **Belonging through Communality:** The programme fostered a profound sense of connection, reciprocal support, and “consistent togetherness.”
- **Diverse perspectives and relationships:** The young creative leads developed a deeper understanding that the core of community–artist work is figuring out what the community truly needs. They did this by building connections and opening spaces for diverse perspectives to be shared.
- **Burdens of power and coloniality:** Critical questioning of power and its functions were a key part of the process of exploring and sharing ideas.
- **Capacity Building through collective sharing:** Mentor Reflections. This section showcases reflections from the organisational leads and mentors about the impacts and outcomes of the capacity building co-learning workshops, and their recommendations to improve and enhance the process and space.



PART TWO

Future Reset Youth Summits (FRYSs)



Curating spaces for creativity, culture, and social connection

This section of the report illustrates the reflections, experiences and insights shared by participants of the Future Reset Youth Summits (FRYSs). The evaluation of FRYSSs was informed by critical youth studies, an interdisciplinary field that positions young people not as passive recipients of support, but as active agents in shaping their own wellbeing (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). As a critical theoretical and epistemological framework, CYS values participatory and youth led approaches, and recognises how creative spaces can foster self-expression and collective meaning-making, and how the arts can allow young people to articulate lived experiences, challenge dominant narratives, and (re)imagine futures.

This section of the evaluation shows how youth-centred spaces such as the FRYSSs, are sites for belonging and agency, how arts can act as a mode of expression, resistance, and healing, and how mental wellbeing is a collective, relational, and contextual process.

Literature Summary:

Summits and spaces for gathering

A ‘summit’ is a meeting of high-level people or leaders who are called to shape or form action, as well as discuss a variety of topics that are pertinent to their lives (Azizan & Zakaria, 2018). They are spaces that enable knowledge mobilisation and building of community. Spaces to meet, engage, share, and discuss topics and issues relevant to community are considered important for social and mental health and well-

being, improve communication and create a sense of community (Thompson & Kent, 2013). They also enable the formation of trust, shared values and networks which can help people feel part of a community.

Art as tool and practice

Spaces for people to connect and engage in art have been regarded as tools for mental health promotion as they boost mental health literacy, reduce negative attitudes toward health-seeking behaviours and foster mental health and wellbeing (Zakarauskaite & Jakubauskiene, 2024). Play and creativity have a positive impact on health and wellbeing (Tonkin & Whitaker, 2016). Tools such as dance and drama and the practice of creating are thought to enable personal and collective expression, explore relationships and social situations and foster feelings of self-esteem and personal self-awareness (Daykin & Joss, 2016; Tonkin & Whitaker, 2016).

As highlighted in the literature review developed in the first stage of the Future Reset project, [Decolonising and critical approaches to community arts: Centering relationality, communality, and power](#) (Sonn et al., 2023), community arts practice can contribute to transformative social change through a number of mechanisms. Community arts practice that centres communality, relationality and critical reflexivity, involves the creation of safe and healing processes and spaces, nurtures socio-political and critical consciousness and engages process and practices of meaning-making. As concluded in the review: “To be connected and in community offers opportunities for more than wellbeing, but fosters healing, revitalisation and rehumanisation, transforms identities and engenders social action” (p. 17).

Overview

Through Future Reset Youth Summits young people from across Victoria came together to connect, share, and cultivate wellbeing through creative vehicles and conversations. The FRYSS brought together passionate young thinkers, artists, and creatives to explore how art, social connection, and mental wellbeing are intertwined. This event highlighted the strength, imagination, and forward-thinking spirit of youth, providing a space for sharing ideas and inspiring one another.

The youth summit was part of a larger initiative to create events, installations and other creative projects that seek to ignite social connection among young people in Victoria. The summits aimed to centre creativity and culture for young people, enabling them to celebrate the diverse and creative ways that individual and collective health and wellbeing can be fostered.

- Creative methods ignite processes that can be valuable to young people's wellbeing.
- Such methods can integrate making, creating and embodiment, engaging both thought, emotion and movement to cultivate genuine connections, encourage dialogue, and unite communities (Catalano & Morales, 2021).
- Additionally, such creative processes, practices and tools foster the positioning of young people as active co-creators of knowledge and communication (Gergen & Gergen, 2011, 2014; Hurd et al., 2023; Sonn & Baker, 2016).

Process of Creating the Summits:

The FRYSSs were designed for young people, by young people. Each summit drew upon the wisdom, experiences, and creative ideas of a Youth Steering Committee (YSC). Using co-design and giving value to lived experience (Goessling et al., 2024), young people took the lead in conversations, creation, planning, and delivery of workshops, programs, activities, and performances. Young people made decisions about what the summit would look and feel like. The program guide from the Melbourne FRYSS conveys the ways this work was fostered:

 “The summit program has been driven by a spectacular group of young people who have committed to a collaborative approach to dreaming this program. With support, they have drawn from their breadth of knowledge and experience to creative opportunities for play, discussion, reflection and calls to action with and for young people as well as creating much needed intergenerational spaces.” (VicHealth, 2022)

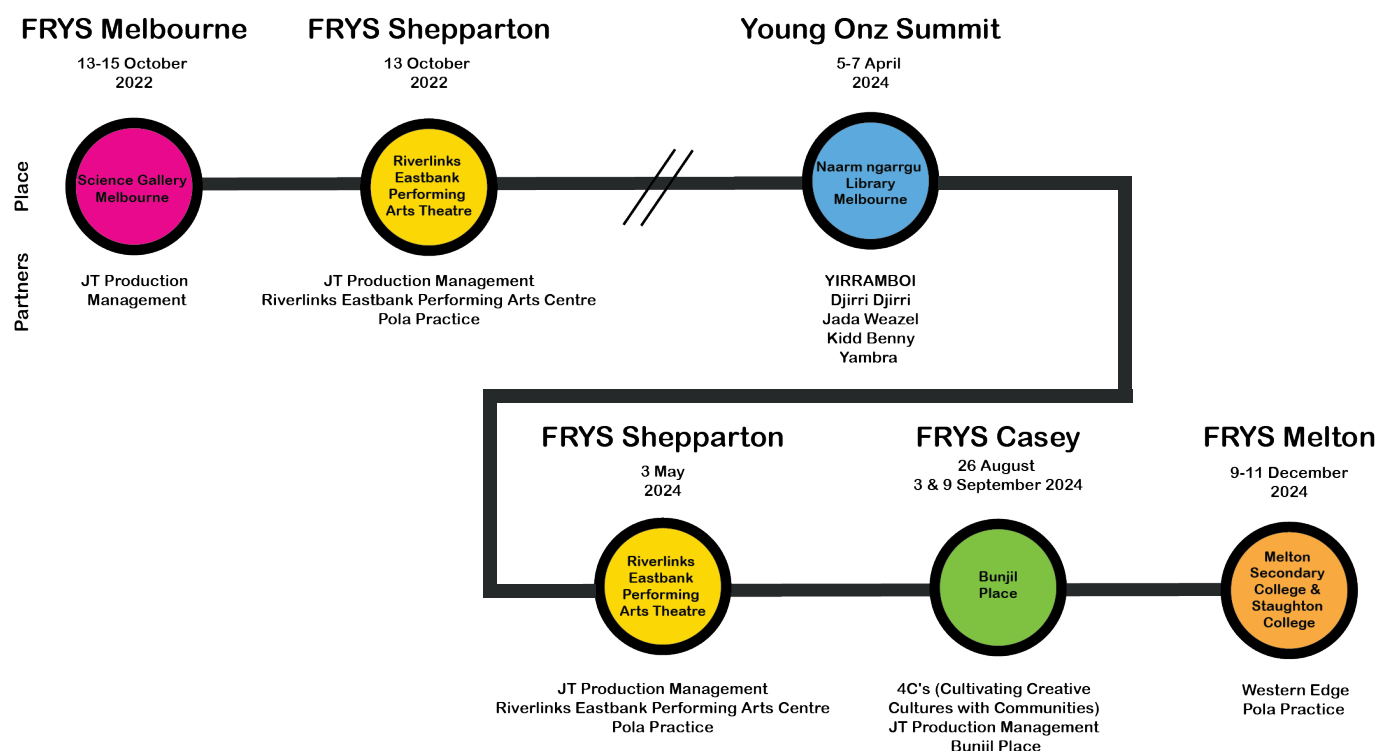
Giving young people the space and power to lead processes can help shape their skills through participation, and generates new ways of being, and a sense of belonging through collective struggles for liberation (Goessling et al., 2024).



Figures 3-7 show the young people of the Youth Steering Committee during the process of planning and brainstorming for the Melbourne FRYSSs. It also includes digital mapping of their visions for the summit space, specifically around the feel they wanted to create and the aspects to be included.

Breakdown of the Future Reset Youth Summits

Figure 8 contains information regarding each of the FRYs and relevant details



How did people participate in the FRYs?

A range of spaces were created in the summits for young people to engage, connect and participate. These came in the form of:

- Workshops
- Panels
- Intergenerational conversations
- Healing Yarns
- Keynotes
- Artists in residence

Panels and keynotes showcased topics such as community activism, navigating institutions, mental health, grief, sexual education, culture and race, social media, disability, and LGBTQI issues. The FRYs also put on a range of kinaesthetic and creative workshops where young people could engage in playing, moving, and creating. Spaces for music and dance performances as well as spaces for retreat and chilling out were also an intentional part of the summits.



Data collection for FRYsSs

Data used for Evaluation

Surveys: Surveys were collected at various FRYsSs with young participants of the summits. Survey questions included demographic questions (How old are you? How do you identify?) as well as questions about what they learnt and what they enjoyed at the summits. Surveys also enabled participants to respond to a range of questions using a Likert scale of 1–5. Some examples of these questions were Did you connect with someone you didn't already know today? Did you feel that you could be yourself at the summit? Did you gain valuable skills from the summit? and What could we have done better?

Recap videos and Voxpops: Recap videos captured snippets of the FRYsSs. They included visuals, videos and reflections from participants and organisers. Transcripts of the recap videos were analysed, and quotes were extracted to convey the meanings, feelings, and experiences of engaging in the FRYsSs.

Analysis and Framing

The evaluation was informed by collaborative approaches guided by critical community psychology (Fisher et al., 2007; Kagan et al., 2019). Data was collected in person and online with young people who attended the summits in addition to others supporting the summits. The data was de-identified and analysed using thematic analysis (Patton, 1990). This was done through coding of video and audio transcripts and visual mapping to organise and understand emerging themes. Through the analysis from pictures, videos and vox-pops, feelings and comments about what the summit encapsulated, and how their impressions and experiences connected to the larger concepts of mental wellbeing and social connection were shared.

Insights from the Future Reset Youth Summits

Fostering Youth-led Initiatives and Spaces

FRYsSs were curated by the community for community; young people made decisions about what the summit would showcase, its programming and its workshops, in addition to leading activities. This was a vital part of the summit's delivery and planning as it enabled young people to be positioned as the experts, leaders and change agents in the spaces and processes they were fostering. They were also given resources and tools to make this happen, which is an important part of young people creating spaces of their own. This ensured that they not only had the space to build youth-led initiatives but that they had the financial, practical and emotional support to do it. Through the work of forming the youth-led and centered spaces, young people designed and created spaces that were safe, welcoming and fostered dialogue, inclusion and democratic participation. In this way, the summits can be understood as facilitating placemaking where young people could collectively re-imagine and reinvent spaces for themselves (Toolis, 2017). As noted by Toolis (2017),

➤ *Critical placemaking can foster conscientization (Freire, 2005) and empowerment (Rappaport, 1987) by reimagining and transforming our relationship with place, our relationships to other community members, and our understanding of what actions are possible...Critical placemaking can work to transform public places into more inclusive and democratic settings of everyday learning and critical pedagogy, planting the seeds for social change. (p.195)*

The Future Reset Youth Summits show how establishing safe and inclusive spaces where young people, especially those from marginalised communities, can come together, share experiences, and organise around common goals. By bringing diverse groups into dialogue and fostering collaboration, these summits have laid a strong foundation for ongoing community-building and collective action among youth.

Summit speaker, Evelyn, emphasised the value of this:

■ *The summit is important to me because young people are not often given space to truly express themselves and lead conversations about their own experiences.*

In creating such spaces for communal resistance and liberation through cultural action, Watkins and Shulman (2008) reflect how these settings then become public-home places– that is places where people feel safe, heard, nurtured, and that they belong. James, a Maori Cultural Community Leader, who was present at the Shepparton summits shared:

■ *Young people need more opportunities like this summit. They need more opportunities where they can feel that they are in a place that is safe enough obviously to express who they are but also have a place that they feel that their voice can be heard.*

Art within the space also contributed to the regeneration and revitalisation of community showing how creative forms of placemaking took place through the process and outcomes of the summit for participants (Courage, & McKeown, 2019). Community arts spaces bring people together and enable them to share ideas and create a sense of community within these settings (Beauregard et al., 2020; Epstein et al., 2021; Laver et al., 2021; Soulsby et al., 2021; Sonn et al., 2015; Sonn et al., 2023).

Building Communality and Social Connection

Young people shared the ways that the summit enabled them to connect with their own community. It provided them with a space to gather, come together and speak about important topics and issues. It also provided them with an opportunity to meet and connect with new people from outside their community. From survey responses, 77.5% of FRYs respondents said that the summits enabled them to socially connect within and beyond their community. Drawing on Toolis (2017) notion of critical placemaking, the creation of settings that are accessible, welcoming (particularly for those who do not have the opportunity to speak or be heard), can be understood as a form of collective practice that fosters belonging and

inclusion. Such spaces are seen to promote health through fostering and increasing social inclusion and enabling connection with others which contributes to social wellbeing.

It is important to note that communality does not reflect homogeneity, but differences coming together (Dutta et al., 2021; Lugones, 2015). Communality serves as both the foundation and the approach for creating and reclaiming stories that restore people's humanity. One of the facilitators from the Melbourne FRYs shared:

■ *There's like a strong connection between wellbeing in community in the sense that to me the healing happens in community, we are like human beings who are social, so we have to feel together in order for the whole society to thrive.*

The summits also reflected "collective capacity" where different organisations, communities, and individuals within the Victorian health sector came together to effectively speak and address health issues and promote wellbeing through sharing knowledge, resources, and collaborative efforts.

Connecting Young People to Culture

As young people were able to share and connect with their culture through the summit, they also connected and learnt about other cultures. Maintaining connections to culture and participating in cultural practices, rituals, and traditions, as fostered through the summits, improves social well-being and health as it can contribute positively to understanding one's identity and form a sense of belonging and community (Sonn et al., 2022). Cultural pride and connection can also empower communities to resist discrimination, advocate for social justice, and create meaningful change.

Performances and activities such as workshops, yarning circles and panels became powerful mechanisms for sharing lived experiences and engaging in play, dialogue and sharing about culture. A young person at the Casey summit conveyed that the space was enriched in dance, song and music from their culture, and shared:

■ *It made me feel proud of my culture seeing people perform.*

Connecting with culture also nurtures socio-political and critical consciousness by supporting communities to recognise and speak about culture, enabling reflection and action on how social, political, and historical factors influence daily life, and how power can obscure or distort communities or cultures (Epstein et al., 2021; Toolis, 2017). These processes are vital for young people as it can enable them to engage in cultural activism and collective resistance, which can help them make sense of and reaffirm their experiences and connect with others in light of these experiences. One of the co-hosts of the Melbourne summit shared:

■ *My most memorable moment of the last three days has been the presence of our Aboriginal Elders and people of Wurundjeri lands and being able to just immerse ourselves in their knowledge and their sharing's and their lived experiences is just incredible.*

These processes can also reinforce a sense of purpose and agency that can foster efforts in working toward positive systemic change and justice (Perry, 2019).

Engaging with Creative Vehicles

Art and cultural activities play an important role in complex health interventions and promoting health and mental wellbeing (Davies & Pescud, 2020). Young people spoke of how the summits allowed them to engage with culture through artistic expression, such as music, song and dance, fostering socially connections, shared experiences and a sense of representation and belonging. A facilitator and mentor present at the Melbourne summit shared:

■ *Arts, mental health and connection are intrinsically tied together. They cannot be seen as separate things. For good mental health you need to connections and arts is a massive part of pulling people together to connect.*

Art became a tool and medium for young people at the summits. Another young facilitator conveyed:

■ *The arts affect my wellbeing by being my stage. I get to express and perform and be everything that I feel, and it is not always good. It can always be my anxious sensitive side, it can be my aggressive side, but through art, I can explore it safely.*

Furthermore, arts helped them to engage in storytelling, which is conveyed in the literature to be a benefit of creative means as it can be vehicle to amplify and understand diverse and multifaceted stories, particularly within the Australian context (Feilding et al., 2019). A member of the Shepparton YSC and workshop facilitator shared:

■ *The arts is important to young people because it allows them to have a platform to express themselves freely without judgment and it creates a lot more for them to be more of themselves. It allows them to create what they want to create and not be influenced by too many things, and I think that there's a lot of beautiful art forms that they can take on and they can personalise it as much as they want and I think it creates a lot more freedom of expression*

This conveys the importance of creative and artistic expressions for young people within the summit, and the effectiveness of such tools in enabling young people to voice, counter and affirm their perspectives.

Summary

Placed within the larger initiative and orientation based on collective impact, the Future Reset Youth Summits have proven to be powerful catalysts, opening the door to what is possible for young people and inspiring them to envision and create positive change. Encouragingly, the summits have already fostered valuable connections and partnerships, enabling participants to collaborate and share resources. By building on these foundations, there is significant potential for the summits to become integral to community and place-making, empowering young people to drive sustained impact well beyond the event itself. Connections to one another through the space of the summits and opportunities to connect through culture and arts was said to be key in strengthening mental and social wellbeing for young people. The ongoing challenge and recommendations moving forward lies in sustaining the momentum of this work and ensuring that the ideas, connections, and enthusiasm generated at the summits continue to flow into long-term, community-driven initiatives.



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