



# Media Release

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*For immediate release*

## Painting a healthy picture

Opening Mental Health Week, the Creative Expression Centre for Arts Therapy (CECAT) will celebrate its 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary with an eclectic art exhibition titled *Art Spoken: 40 years in the making*.

Art therapy provides an avenue to explore past trauma, grief and pain - feelings often at the root of mental illness. The practice gained professional recognition as 'Art Therapy' in the 1960's in the UK, USA and Europe. The use of 'art as medicine', however, has been around for millennia.

Located on Graylands Health Campus in Mt Claremont, CECAT opened in 1968 as a WA Department of Health art therapy service that was quick to embrace this innovative approach. With the capacity to provide services for 80 active participants at a time, CECAT has shaped a 40 year history as the first and longest serving Australian arts therapy service associated with a psychiatric hospital.

"CECAT's 40<sup>th</sup> Anniversary pays homage to the important contribution art therapy continues to make in the area of mental health. Our programs specifically target recovery to help rebuild one's sense of self," said CECAT Clinical Service Manager Danita Walsh.

CECAT sessions engage participants in visual art processes such as painting, phototherapy, drawing, ceramics and creative writing and may also incorporate relaxation and visualisation techniques, guided imagery, music, movement and role-play.

"The art therapy process can help identify someone's feelings, cognitive processes, potential self-harm or suicidal risk, as well as their progression towards wellness and recovery. Observations of a client's process and/or interpretations of his or her art work can be communicated to their treating team. This may assist in providing a more holistic treatment plan for the individual," said Ms Walsh.

CECAT client Susan Leisavnieks said art therapy had changed her life by giving her a non-confrontational way to express challenging issues.

"For example, by using personal photographs and arranging them with other objects and rephotographing them I found that I was able to deal with feelings about a relative."

"During the art therapy process, I feel safe and supported having developed close relationships with CECAT staff. This allows me to take risks and confront issues relating to trauma that I have not been able to face in the past," said Miss Leisavnieks.

Cont. Painting a healthy picture

To enable CECAT to focus on in-depth therapy for clients with acute needs, a subsidiary service, Reflections Art Studio (RAS), opened in 2006 in vibrant Northbridge. RAS provides services to 60 people with persistent mental illness requiring ongoing art therapy intervention to maximise mental health stability. CECAT welcomes client referrals by mental health professionals who can provide ongoing client case-management.

The *Art Spoken: 40 years in the making* exhibition runs from the 4<sup>th</sup> to the 12<sup>th</sup> October at the Moores Building Contemporary Art Gallery, 46 Henry Street, Fremantle between 9:00am to 5:00pm.

Co-ordinated by the WA Association for Mental Health, Mental Health Week runs from 5<sup>th</sup>-11<sup>th</sup> October 2008. It aims to raise awareness of the importance of mental health and well-being in the wider community, to increase community education about mental health issues and to encourage participation in life enhancing lifestyles.

ENDS

Images forming part of the exhibition can be provided on request.

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