



***Illuminated by Fire***  
***Fire. Art. Resilience.***



**Final Evaluation Report July 2011**

**Report prepared by Lindy Allen  
incorporating earlier research by Joseph Toohey**

For more information, contact Lindy Allen

E: [lallen@rav.net.au](mailto:lallen@rav.net.au)

P: (03) 9644 1800

M: 0439 999 248

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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*Illuminated by Fire* is a project about the places we care about and the story and role of fire within them. Working across Victoria over 2010 and 2011, the project sought to share stories, increase understanding of the role and history of fire within participants' own communities and create memorable and moving art.

This document is the final evaluation report on the two-year initiative, encompassing an evaluation of the expressions-of-interest process in 2010, the local presentation outcomes in 2010 and the final presentation in Fed Square in June/July 2011.

Using an intelligent questioning approach, this evaluation report interrogated a range of key stakeholders and participants, documenting their earlier stated aims and aspirations for the project and interviewing them at key stages in the project delivery to explore how well these aims and aspirations had been met.

The report finds that *Illuminated by Fire* more than adequately met the stated aims and objectives established at the outset of the program by all key stakeholders including Regional Arts Victoria, project partners including the Office of the Emergency Services Commissioner, funding bodies the Australia Council and Arts Victoria and the aims of all the artists involved. The report presents the findings in the three thematic concerns of the *Illuminated by Fire* project: Fire, Art and Resilience. The report also evaluates our project design and delivery at all three stages of implementation.

This report importantly aimed to investigate the extent to which an arts program could effectively tackle an issue that was imbued with widespread recent experience of trauma, grief and loss as a result of the Black Saturday bushfires in Victoria. Overwhelmingly, we demonstrate that this has been achieved. We also demonstrate that RAV's considered experience in large-scale multi-sited project design and delivery, with clearly articulated aims, objectives, roles and responsibilities, rigorous planning and delivery processes and strong artistic management, have been critical to the project meeting this particular objective.

It is very clear from survey responses from artists, participants and audiences that this art project has successfully raised awareness around some very complex issues. In Creswick, artists worked closely with fire ecologists from the Forestry Department of the University of Melbourne and as a result, artists and participants both reported that their formerly fixed views around forestry management practices being the enemy of sustainability have been challenged and shifted. Community discussion around fire as a critical element of plant regeneration has been provoked in a number of locations including Portland and Ballarat. In Dunkeld, the project has tackled the importance of teaching young people how to responsibly light and use fire. The Lakes Entrance project has effectively prompted participants and audiences to talk about indigenous fire management practices and what contemporary communities might learn from this. The role of arts projects in assisting people to properly grieve and move forward has been profoundly expressed by those involved in the Flowerdale, Kyneton and Hurstbridge projects. Many of the projects, notably Maldon, profiled the role of the CFA in community preparedness and response to fire events

and this has engendered awareness and pride of participants and audiences. The sheer beauty of the Briagolong installation engaged audiences in the mesmerising power of a good camp fire which is the perfect place to share stories.

***“Art connects people. It’s non-confrontational.”***

***“Art helps recovery. It connects people.”***

What is abundantly clear from the survey responses is that this project has provided an easy forum in which to discuss complex and sensitive issues. It has also provided an opportunity for people directly and indirectly involved to share their stories either as part of the local outcomes in 2010 or through being an audience member and taking part in the day and night tours at Fed Square in 2011.

In conducting this evaluation RAV also wanted to interrogate its own processes around project design and delivery. Local artists all spoke highly of what they had gained by their involvement in terms of extending their arts practice and showing their work in a beautiful space to a Melbourne audience. An arriving at Fed Square, Aboriginal artist from Lakes Entrance Lennie Hayes said, “Are they really letting us in here?” As a counterpoint, Fed Square staff constantly remarked that they had never seen the space looking so beautiful and the work looked like it had been made for the space and vice versa. One woman travelled from Vienna specifically to see her friend’s work (part of the Hurstbridge installation) just because it was in Fed Square, in the heart of Melbourne.

Community participants who had worked with their local artist in 2010, and subsequently embarked on the serious commitment of a week-long residency at Fed Square in 2011, all spoke of how much they enjoyed the experience of collaborating and sharing. Artists and participants also roundly endorsed the project management processes commenting often on how much greater they understood and appreciated the work that goes into delivery of a project of this size. The perennial problem of insufficient funds to adequately compensate an artists’ investment of time was raised mainly during 2010.

Through working with Fed Square RAV has risen to the challenge of improving artists’ production manuals, risk management strategies, insurance checklists and delegations for complex, large-scale event delivery.

Through its long history of delivering state-wide projects, RAV has been primarily concerned with building capacity in regional communities and profiling regional art and artists. Central to this is a commitment to ensuring the art delivered in the context of working closely with community members has the very highest aesthetic value. This evaluation has interrogated artists, audience members and participants with the question, “Was the art astonishing.” We asked artists if they were pleased, participants if they were proud and audiences if they were moved. All spoke of the intense commitment of the artists and participants to delivering performances and presentations, sometimes against significant hurdles (such as unexpected flood then snow in drought-afflicted Creswick in 2010).

In terms of community engagement, all of the artists have spoken of the almost overwhelming enthusiasm of those who became involved locally. Participants enjoyed being involved, making new friends and connections and talking about local issues of significance. Some participants had a first-time encounter with art, one famously commenting, “I thought art was farty, but now it doesn’t seem so bad.” Projects that were delivered with a strong engagement with their local CFA have reported increased membership to the local brigade. Many participants and audience members have commented positively on greater awareness and appreciation for Aboriginal artists and indigenous practices in relation to fire management.

***“I thought art was farty, but now it doesn’t seem so bad.”***

One of the happy side effects of the state-wide project model employed by RAV has been the peer networks that have been established between participating artists. All artists have commented on the value of being part of this large cohort, being challenged and inspired by other regional artists and by the Artistic Director Donna Jackson and Curator of Stories Malcolm McKinnon.

Overall, this evaluation has demonstrated that:

- art can provoke discussion and awareness around complex issues
- good art is far more effective at every level than art which is not challenged to be the best it can be
- risky art can be presented in risk-averse spaces if sufficient time is allowed to negotiate to challenges
- regional art can be ‘astonishing’ to sophisticated Melbourne audiences providing the production and presentation values are high
- the experience of collaborating and sharing stories is very enriching to those who live in regional Victoria
- RAV must continue to develop projects which prioritise employment for regional artists
- rigorous processes are critical to good outcomes
- state-wide peer networks are a valuable and valued mechanism in professional development for regionally-based artists

In closing, I would like to paraphrase a comment many of us heard frequently from visitors to the installation in Fed Square in Jun/Jul 2011. “I didn’t think it would look this good.” This was often prefaced with an apology along the lines of, “I don’t know how to say this nicely but...” They were all somewhat ashamed to admit that they had previously laboured under the delusion that regional art was somehow a poor and somewhat daggy country cousin to the work produced in the city. If we have managed to challenge this, even for a few, we have acquitted ourselves well.

***“I didn’t think it would look this good.”***

Lindy Allen  
Director, Regional Arts Victoria

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

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This report has been put together with contributions from a number of people:

Artistic Director Donna Jackson

Curator of Stories Malcolm McKinnon

Project Co-ordinator (2010) Joe Toohey

Production Co-ordinator (2011) Julia Earley

The artists:

Ken Evans and Rebecca Russell

Jacob Boehme and Margie Mackay

Catherine Larkins, Lennie Hayes and Frances Harrison

Kathryn Portelli

Deanne Neville

Leanne Mooney

Maxine Salvatore

Trevor Flinn

Carmel Wallace

Sharon Collins

Tracy Bourne

Victoria University Creative Industries Student Madeleine Stuglis

## INTRODUCTION

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A two-year project initiated by Regional Arts Victoria, in 2010 *Illuminated by Fire* was delivered in partnership with the Neighbourhood House and Learning Centre network. 13 artists were embedded in 11 locations across regional Victoria. A local workshop program engaged participants through a staged process beginning with the sharing and development of stories in relation to fire, to a local presentation outcome from October to November 2010. In June 2011, 10 of these projects were presented as a site-specific multi-media installation in Federation Square, Melbourne as part of the *Light in Winter* festival.

This document incorporates:

- an evaluation of Stage 1, the project design and the expressions-of-interest process. Information was gathered from an online survey conducted with Neighbourhood Houses.
- an evaluation of Stage 2, the delivery of the local projects in 11 locations in regional Victoria. The information was taken from recorded interviews with 60 stakeholders including artists, project participants, audience members and Regional Arts Development Officers from October to December 2010.
- an evaluation of Stage 3, the final outcome at Fed Square in Melbourne. This information was taken from 45 surveys with audience members, 34 surveys with project participants and 12 surveys with artists and is further supported by a face to face day-long evaluation session conducted with the artists on 23 July 2011.

The intended audience for this evaluation is Regional Arts Victoria, the Artistic Director, and Curator of Stories, interested funding bodies and interested delivery partners. The evaluation for the project has been designed to be implemented by Regional Arts Victoria staff and volunteers. The evaluation will be used not only to acquit the project with all key stakeholders but also to inform future creative initiatives of a similar scale by Regional Arts Victoria. At this time in Australia, RAV is the only organisation regularly undertaking multi-sited arts projects and it is therefore critical that we evaluate whether or not these projects genuinely meet our objectives and that their delivery continues to set new benchmarks.

These state-wide projects have the following distinguishing hallmarks:

- they respond to demonstrated need from the communities involved
- they demonstrate comprehensive consultation during a generous period of development
- a clarity of purpose in the use of artistic practice to respond to the identified need
- rigorous processes and check-in points to support multi-sited activity
- clearly defined roles and responsibilities for all involved
- employment for local artists as a priority
- training and/or mentoring to thoroughly support local artists and artworkers and extend their skills base
- a strong commitment to inclusivity, particularly in relation to attracting those who might not normally become involved in an arts activity (such as men, young people or new arrivals)
- demonstrating the capacity of well-conceived and delivered arts projects to drive cultural change
- a commitment to ensuring access to innovative, contemporary, participatory arts experience to the one-in-three Victorians who live outside the metropolitan area

- a local outcome aimed at strong engagement with the local community coupled with a presentation outcome in Melbourne with the objective of lifting the profile of regional artists and arts projects to a wider audience

Surveys were designed to elicit audience, participant and artists' assessments of whether or not or how well we had met articulated objectives of funding bodies, partners, RAV, the Project Reference Group, the Executive Management Team and the artists.

The evaluation is assembled and presented under the headings of Fire, Art and Resilience, with an additional two sections dedicated to summarising the key figures for the project and a review of the project processes in a principally qualitative fashion. Information collected from interviews is done so with the consent of interviewees, with a focus on key themes emerging from the interviews rather than attempting to express all the views of everyone consulted.

This report is kept brief and summative, with each section relying on direct quotes wherever possible. Further information on the data presented herein can be gathered from the interview transcripts at Regional Arts Victoria.

## EVALUATING STAGE ONE: PROJECT DESIGN AND THE EXPRESSIONS-OF-INTEREST PROCESS

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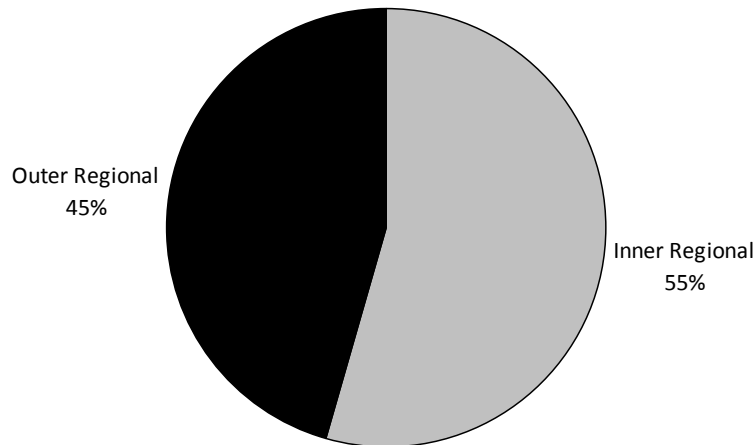
This section is the preliminary evaluation report on the two-year *Illuminated by Fire* project, undertaken once all artists and Neighbourhood House and Learning Centres (NHLCs) were contracted in August 2010. Information has been gathered from documents submitted from artists and NHLCs including contracts, Memorandum of Understandings, and Expressions of Interest.

### Diversity of Cultural Voices

There is a significant geographical spread of projects, as evidenced in Figure 1, with the distance between the two furthest projects a total of over 600 km (between Lakes Entrance and Swan Hill). These locations represent a total of 9 different Country Fire Authority (CFA) regions, with Region 15 in Central Victoria represented by 3 projects. Figure 2 demonstrates good distribution between Outer and Inner Regional locations (as determined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics Remoteness Index classifications), with 45% of projects from Outer Regional areas and 55% from Inner Regional. No projects from Metropolitan or Remote areas are included in *Illuminated by Fire* in 2010.

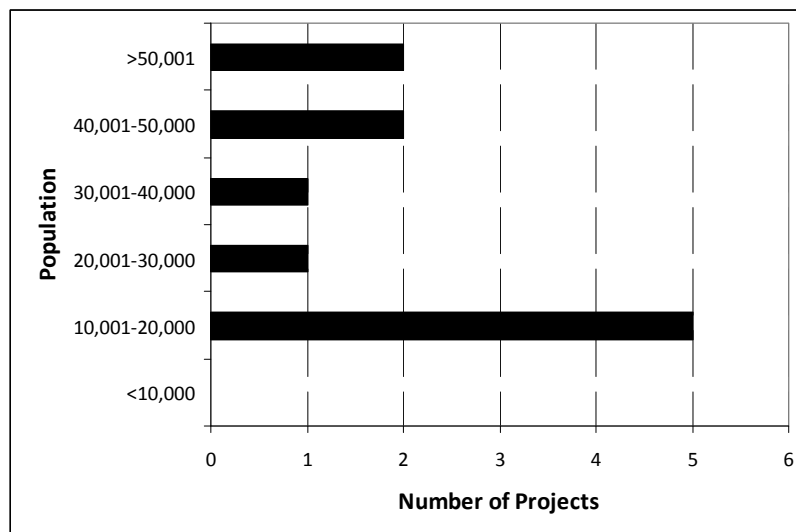


Figure 1 – Geographic Distribution of Projects



*Figure 2 – Regional Distribution of Projects*

Figure 3 highlights that over half (55%) of projects occur in Local Government Areas (LGAs) which have less than 30,000 people in them. The average population size of LGAs involved in the project is 33,179.



*Figure 3 – Population of LGAs in Illuminated by Fire Project Areas*

**Artists and Art Form**

There were a total of 34 EoI’s submitted, with 11 of these being selected (a 32% success rate). Two of the 11 successful projects had two artists involved in the submission, meaning 13 local artists were employed in the first year. With the Artistic Director and Curator of Stories positions the total number of artists involved in 2010 was 15. The distribution of gender between artists involved in the project is somewhat more one-sided, with almost three-quarters of the artists involved in *Illuminated by Fire* being female.

Figure 4 summarises the art forms. A number of projects represent multiple art forms, which accounts for the high number of cumulative projects. These art forms have been interpreted from project descriptions provided by artists in their original EoI. Sculpture is

the most common form, followed by works involving installation and film. Theatre, projection, photography, music and dance are equally represented in the project.

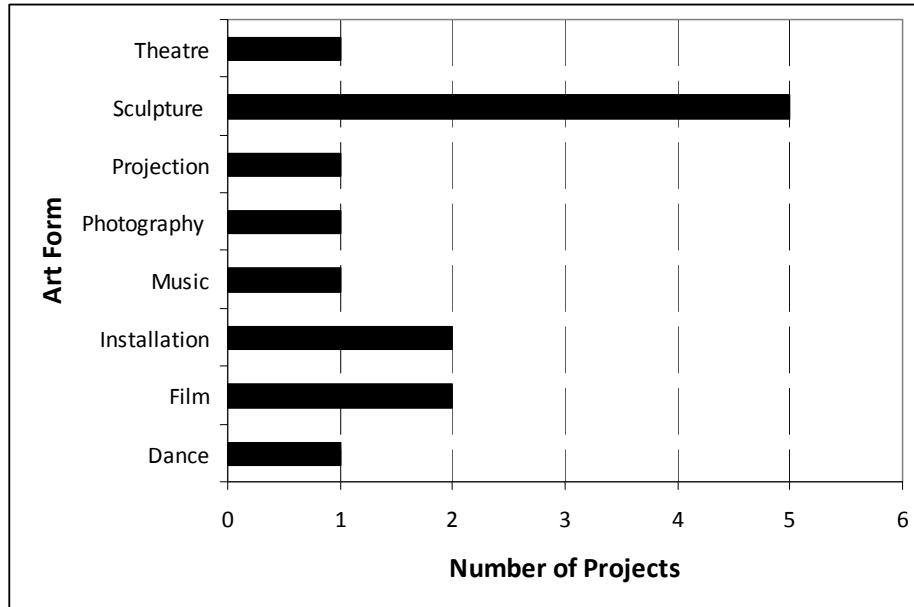


Figure 4 – Art Form of Projects

**Positive Media Attention**

All artists, RAV staff and NHLCs were provided with a Media and Marketing Protocols document which included template media releases with text acknowledging funding bodies and partners in the project. Partners have not always been acknowledged in media. Figure 5 summarises the distribution of the known media coverage to date. Of 36 media articles mentioning the project to date, the majority have been through websites (30%), newsletters (25%) or newspapers (25%). All articles were either neutral in their treatment of the *IbF* project (such as event notices) or were positive, with interviews with local artists an example of positive treatment of the subject matter.

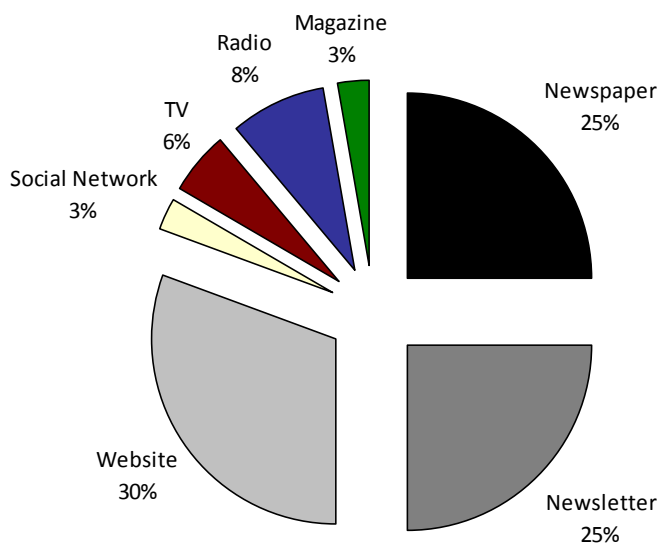
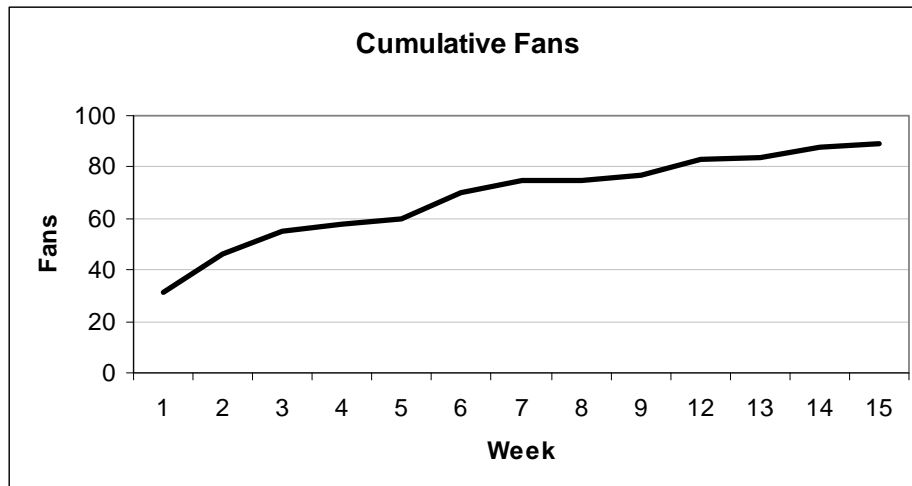


Figure 5 – Distribution of Media Coverage by Medium

## Social Media

A Facebook ‘fan’ page was established for the project in May 2010. Figure 6 charts the number of ‘fans’ of the *Illuminated by Fire* Facebook fan page over the weeks since it was established. It highlights a steady increase of fans of the page, to a total of 89 fans at the time of writing.



<http://www.facebook.com/pages/Illuminated-by-Fire/126682807344750?ref=ts>

Figure 6 – Cumulative Fans of the *Illuminated by Fire* Facebook Page

The Facebook page has been used to provide informal project updates, as well as introduce artists and their projects, with 1,010 visits and 54 ‘interactions’ to August 2010 suggesting take-up and interactivity on the page has been good. It has been particularly useful in the absence of a dedicated project site (see section on *Storyboard* below), complemented by a linked Twitter feed at [http://twitter.com/Illum\\_by\\_Fire](http://twitter.com/Illum_by_Fire) which has 52 followers at the time of writing. This equates to a combined social media presence of 141 ‘followers’ of the project.

## Storyboard

At the time of writing this report, the *Storyboard* website was still in development and due for launch September 17 2010.

## Network Promotion

There is evidence that partner organisations have been promoting *IbF* through their extended networks. Examples of this include an article in the Emergency Service Commissioner Newsletter *EM*; website and newsletter listing by NHLCs including Allwood Neighbourhood House and Kyneton Community and Learning Centre; and updates on the *Flowerdale – Survivor Spirit* blog in Flowerdale. There are likely to be more, informal promotion efforts occurring which haven’t been picked up in online searches. These promotions by partner organisations, particularly at a local level, are invaluable to raising awareness of the project on an informal, ongoing basis. They also highlight the value of partnerships being developed by RAV and local artists to widen the reach of *IbF*.

### **Neighbourhood Houses**

10 of the 11 projects in 2010 are partnered with a NHLC. The one artist not working with an NHLC is instead partnered with a Primary Care Partnership Organisation. In total, 48 NHLCs expressed an interest in being part of project, from the initial call for Eols through to submissions from artists. With 10 now involved in the project, this represents a 21% success rate for NHLCs.

### **Contracts & Memoranda of Understanding**

All 13 local artists, the Artistic Director and Curator of Stories had signed contracts with RAV to deliver the project in 2010. All artist contracts stipulated that artists would be required to have appropriate public liability insurance coverage. All NHLCs have signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with RAV. Both demonstrate a solid administrative process as a minimum for working on the project. Artist contracts have been designed to assist in the monitoring of project outlines. The contracts release an initial payment and materials fee to artists only once a revised project outline has been signed off by the Artistic Director. The final artist payment and materials fee, further, is linked to Artistic Director sign-off on a detailed Production Plan. These check-in process been particularly useful in two of the 11 projects, which experienced some delay in sign-off (pending clarification of some operational issues). Reference to the artist contract has thus been a useful negotiating tool in managing the effective delivery of projects by the Artistic Director, and ensured project outcomes are resolved early.

### **Partnerships**

The major partners in the project to date include the NHLC learning network, Country Fire Authority (CFA) and Office of the Emergency Services Commission (OESC). RAV has not previously partnered with these organisations on a project the scale of *Illuminated by Fire*, suggesting that new connections have been enabled through this project. Support letters submitted from representatives at these organisations also highlight the complimentary aims *IbF* achieves for non-arts organisations. Support letters have been secured from the OESC, CFA, and NHLC network which all note the relevance of *IbF* to their operating activities. The support letters can thus be acknowledged as evidence that *IbF* meets the aims of partner organisations as well as RAV.

## EVALUATING STAGE TWO: DELIVERY OF LOCAL OUTCOMES IN 2010

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### Theme One: Fire

Participants in the project were asked about the impact of *IbF* on raising awareness of fire in Victoria. In particular we asked them to consider the creative approaches to address a complex issue such as living with fire. Responses are summarised in the sections below.

#### *Using creative approaches to address complex issues around living with fire*

Artists used a range of methods to address issues around fire. Examples provided by artists included:

- “...(giving) members of the CFA their own cameras to go out and photograph fire brigade training and fire activity, and (skilling) them up so that they'll do more of that in the future. (Now) they'll just always take the cameras with them or their phones and just get a picture, because they love getting pictures of their fires.”
- “...the cooks and the woodcutters demonstrated through cooking and chopping, and speaking about those activities and their relationship to fire, that was a way of addressing that creative connection, showing the historical relationship to fire through cooking and chopping. So the video work was a way of bringing those stories to a contemporary audience...”
- “I investigated with the Aboriginal community stories about fire, so the story about the fire-tail finch and the gang-gang cockatoo who brought fire to them in their dream time, right through to the briquette, that's now the basis of where electricity and fire comes from.”
- “I took those on board who were interested in making an artistic vessel to contain their loved ones through a high quality process to achieve a unique representation of that life.”

These examples demonstrate the range of ways in which artists responded to the challenge of fire creatively.

Participants too felt that the project was a good way to share ideas about living with fire. Positive responses included:

- “Yeah, I think that (fire has) got such bad press since Black Saturday and you've got to realise that if you use it in a sensible way it is very helpful to mankind.”
- “I love Tracy's idea of fire carrying on through the generations and the connection through the generations and then the idea of giving fire to the youth, the young people. They would now carry forward the idea of fire in whatever shape that took.”
- (From a CFA volunteer): “That's a hard one because we do that because we are in the brigade anyway. But the answer has to be yes because I think this project has done so much for the brigade. It's been an exercise that everyone's been involved with the outcome tonight the answer has to be unequivocally yes.”
- “The depth of people's understanding about fire is so wide, and I think this project has illuminated everybody to funerary urns, it's amazing.”

- “I lost a couple of friends from High School who were in a fire just south of Traralgon, and it's touched a lot of people around here very closely. A lot of the stories in there, everyone would have been able to relate to.”

The process then, as well as the final message, seems to have been positive for participants in the project with the range of responses above indicative of this response (such as that from the CFA volunteer quoted above).

#### *Developing a better understanding of fire within local natural environments*

Responses varied in terms of whether people felt that the project had increased understanding of fire in local environments. Artists noted that:

- “I think it was trust in me and being excited about the opportunity to do something different. From the week before the performance right through to the performance I think their knowledge and excitement about the ideas in the piece and the knowledge about fire, and understanding about fire in a natural environment grew.”
- “I think what we did was present some challenging and alternative views of fire that perhaps with the media-grab language we use with fire doesn't get covered. I think we came in the side with a few challenging ideas about fire...”
- “I think the better understanding came from looking at the complexity of fire in the natural environment.”
- “(Participants in the project) were looking at the natural environment and seeing that fire had happened there before and the environment had regenerated, and their box was about it regenerating again. So that was a positive way of looking at fire.”

Clear from these responses from the artists is the feeling from artists that increasing the complexity and subtlety of language used in regards to fire was a major accomplishment of their respective projects. It will be interesting to re-visit this question in the communities where the projects were based in three-six months time to determine what lasting impact the project might have had.

Neighbourhood Houses similar felt the project increased their awareness, with comments including:

- “It's created a greater appreciation of fire and history.”
- “Although our project is on water, and had less of a focus on bushfires, we did however discuss such things amongst ourselves, and one of our orchids had beaded onto the petals, the names and dates of fires which occurred in our town and district.”

Predictably, given their levels of involvement in fire recovery projects since Black Saturday 2009, Regional Arts Development Officers generally did not feel that their personal awareness of fire increased from the project, though they were not asked to detail the community response to the project (this was left to the artists). Despite this, some did note though that “...my answer might be different if I'd seen all the others” and “maybe not investigating the positive side of it.”

The fire message, then, in so far as it reaching communities and being communicated by artists in their process and outcomes, was generally felt to be prominent by the stakeholders involved.

## Theme Two: Art

The extension of arts practice for regional artists was a critical focus of the *Illuminated by Fire* project. The following sections detail some of the self-evaluation responses by artists and audience members, as well as participants, to this challenge.

### *Extension of arts practice*

Artists unanimously agreed that the project extended their arts practice. Comments from artists included:

- “This is my work so it must extend me. It also extended me in that it was exploring new media and structural challenges.”
- “It got me out of the studio and meeting the community, working with the community.”
- “...this project in some ways really brought together some of that work we've been playing with for a while.”

A number of participants, including Regional Arts Development Officers, also learned new skills from being involved in the projects, as demonstrated by the following comments:

- “Preparing for wet weather!”
- “My wife normally takes all the photos, and that's a point of contention because I'm always in photos and she is always taking them. So hopefully now with a bit more practice with her camera we can flip it around and I take a few more photos of her.”
- “You're always developing new problem solving skills because no matter what show you do they're always different, everything changes bit by bit.”
- “I learned lessons like it's a hell of a lot easier to do indoor events than outdoor.”
- “I didn't learn new skills but I tested some political savvy.”

Those who felt they didn't learn new skills generally gave the reason that they had worked on similar projects before or in similar fields.

### *Astonishing art*

Artists felt that the work created was ‘astonishing’. Comments from artists included:

- “Yes, there was a strong concept beautifully executed. There was nothing that was ever just owned by one person and because of that the integrity of the work had to be really good.”
- “I feel like it was outstanding because it was so big and it's quite spectacular.”
- “It was big, and bigger than I thought it would be. I think the combinations of fire and singing and being outdoors worked well.”
- “I think some of it was. I think some of it wasn't. However when you link it all together it becomes one piece. I think (the sound installation) worked well.”
- “I think it definitely was... each in their own way.”

The last two comments above relate to projects where community members created their own pieces as part of a larger work, and thus reflects the professional artists aesthetic judgement of the individual pieces and their contribution to the whole.

Audience members interviewed after some of the performances in 2010 were universally impressed by the projects. Some comments included:

- “I loved when the whole picture came together and then when the actual fire happened outside and that idea of how dynamic fire is became really present just outside the doors, the whole image put together. So it was a beautiful, beautiful project.”
- “Well I'm impressed. I sort of came here not knowing what to expect and after a wine and a sausage role I've had a good night.”
- “...I was inspired actually. It made me think about a lot of things about everybody being one and how we all come from the earth and we all come from water, we breathe the same air, and I felt all that was really brought out tonight.”
- “I think the project outcome of the chandelier is very impressive. It's magnificent. It was quite hypnotic when we were all sitting in the room and even the children were quiet.”
- “This is just amazing. From concept to finish it's just incredible.”
- “...I think this is one of the most positive projects that I've ever seen. What really captures my imagination and also attracts my praise is that it has positive and ongoing health benefits into the future.”

Clear from these comments is the success of the project in creating astonishing art which connected with an audience.

#### *The role of art in raising awareness of issues*

Participants in the projects were asked an additional question as to whether they felt art could be used to raise awareness of sensitive issues more generally, not just in relation to fire. Responses were positive, and included comments such as:

- “Definitely without a doubt. I think it's a really good avenue to educate people.”
- “I think so. It illustrates that we can use art in a practical way, it's not just like a painting hanging on a wall, it's like a story.”
- “I think art is an amazing and universal way of talking about any issue, not just fire.”
- “Absolutely, and it resolves some peoples issues, whether they've got baggage about fire, all that sort of stuff. I think it's just so valuable.”
- “It bridges the gap between a somewhat taboo topic and art; when they're put together, people are more open to talking about art then they are talking about something that they are not very comfortable with.”
- “Yeah, art's all about healing people, that's what I reckon anyway.”

Neighbourhood Houses too felt the arts were able to increase awareness, with comments such as:

“Art is often the only way to create awareness of any sensitive issue”

These quotes on the role of arts reinforce the concept behind the *Illuminated by Fire* project, demonstrating the perceived value of art in addressing issues by participants.

### Theme Three: Resilience

It was important in measuring the success of the first year of the *Illuminated by Fire* project to examine the level of resilience it built in the communities in which it was hosted. The sections below explore some of the community response to the project, as well as longer term network and/or partnership building.

#### *Community response*

Artists outlined what they thought worked for the community, with comments including:

- “I think understanding a bit more about the natural and cultural history of the place, that it's not just a lake... humans have shaped that place as well as nature shaping the place. “
- “It was just about sitting around and working and talking about their experiences. They also enjoyed seeing each others work as well.”
- “Afterwards (the event), it was palpable that sense of connection.”

Neighbourhood Houses too felt the response from the community was positive. All but one of the five respondents to the survey felt the project brought new people into their space (with the other answering ‘not sure’). When asked how the community responded to the project, answers included:

- “Very supportive. The deferral due to weather issues slowed the momentum in the latter stages, but generally I believe it has been an overwhelming success for our community...”
- “Really well, no negative feedback has been heard.”

One did note that “community response would have been greater if the project was launched 6 months earlier.”

Neighbourhood Houses also felt it raised the profile of the Neighbourhood House, with comments such as;

- “I think quite significantly. Initially the artist was focussed on her 'in studio' work at the Arts Company, but began to include us more as time went on.”

Regional Arts Development Officer’s supported this assessment, with comments such as:

- “I think it's opened up the dialogue of a difficult subject.”
- “The immediate response from the crowd was joyous, it was really fun.”
- “The artistic beauty of it was really important to our community.”
- “I think because it had the sitting round session, making things with your hands, that was really accessible. It had the interviewing of people and their grandkids and their grandmothers and their teachers, they all had a connection, even if they weren't the one interviewed they knew the person that was being interviewed.”

When asked if there was any resistance to the project in the community, common responses from Neighbourhood Houses and Regional Arts Development Officers alike included:

- “There was a little conflict between a couple of local organisations where people initially appeared quite possessive of the plans, and also some minor communications

breakdowns with 'artistic' personalities, but our RAV rep did a really terrific job in keeping it all on track.”

- “Many fire affected people felt the project was too late. The process of rebuilding lives and properties had been well and truly started.”
- “I think there was a little bit of fire fatigue. I think for some of them it took a little for the understanding and exploring and opening a dialogue about fire and it not just being 'oh, we've done fire', we've over fire, we've heard the commission and mmm' so I think there was a bit of resistance there.”

### *Partnerships*

A means of measuring the long-term impact of the project in a community can be measured by highlighting new partnerships or networks developed. Artists gave examples including:

- “The CFA have just all been fantastic, lots of future opportunities there. Parks Victoria were supportive...”
- “I don't think I could have done this project without support from RAV and from Donna in particular. I just really felt pushed and challenged and supported.”
- “The Men's Shed helped us build the set. Out of that came a few people who remained with us all the way through.”
- “The health service generously helped me across projects.”
- “The funeral director... thought it was a really good opportunity.”

Some of the challenges in partnerships for artists included:

- “(At the Neighbourhood House) there's only ever (the coordinator) there or the Mayor, so for that reason alone I probably wouldn't work with them on a project where you need all this contributing.”
- “It wasn't straightforward with Neighbourhood House but in the end... they really got behind it.”

Clearly, different partnerships worked at a range of levels for each community.

Participants in the project also extended their networks or made new friends, with comments including:

- “Oh yeah, I made plenty of friends, especially Sharon and her family. I'm not a very sociable person but this has brought me out of my shell a bit.”
- “...met quite a few people who live in my local area, I didn't know they were there before so yeah it's been good.”

Neighbourhood Houses also commented that:

- “... closer contact with reps from a couple of the bigger sponsors, has consolidated the potential for future application or approaches from us about other projects.”
- “The Centre now has a relationship with a couple of the artists and has developed links with council staff in relation to advertising events across the shire.”

Regional Arts Development Officers also highlighted some examples of new networks or partnerships being delivered, with comments such as:

- “I did get to know people in the community more, and better than I had before so that was lovely. So it was really about making friends in my own town, which was a bit unexpected.”
- “I'm looking to continue to work with the Ballarat North Neighbourhood House on another project so potentially.”
- “I strengthened the networks that I had with the two community groups in so much that they are really keen to continue working, not necessarily together, but wanting to use me as a resource to be able to get more projects to happen.”

#### *Future collaborations*

Artists gave examples of possible future collaborations arising from the project, including:

- “Something that's happened out of this is I'm helping them with a local historical booklet, and my big thing will be to use it to recruit new people.”
- “I'm interested in diversity of community groups, people from different backgrounds meditating on the place that we live in and thinking about sustainability. I'd like to work with (the indigenous choir) next year and I'm talking to the RADO about connecting up with them.”
- “The school... we're already talking about something next year. Of course now the school will do anything.”

Neighbourhood Houses generally felt that they would work with the project partners, including Regional Arts Victoria and the Regional Arts Development Officer again, though this would largely depend on the project or process arrangements.

It is evident on the whole that networks and partnerships were created in communities which will be beneficial for stakeholders in the future.

## **Quantitative Outcomes in Stage 2**

#### *Locations*

- 11 regional locations; 45% outer regional and 55% inner regional
- 9 CFA regions represented
- Over 50% of projects in local government areas (LGAs) with less than 30,000 people in them; an average LGA size of 33,179
- \$22,000 in payments to Neighbourhood House and Learning Centres

#### *Artists*

- 13 Project/local artists employed
- 1 Artistic Director
- 1 Curator of Stories
- 73% of artists females, 27% male
- 8 art forms represented: sculpture; installation; film; theatre; projection; photography; music; and dance
- Over \$115,000 in artist fees and over \$33,000 in materials payment

#### *Participation and Audience*

- 10 projects launched in 2010
- Over 720 participants in 11 projects
- Approximately 2,530 people in attendance across 10 events
- 5 Regional Arts Development Officers assisting projects

#### *Media*

- Over 99 media stories in mediums including online, radio, and print at November 2010
- 128 Facebook 'Friends', with over 2,511 total page views
- 59 Twitter Followers
- 1,226 absolute unique visits to the *Storyboard* website from August to December 2010
- 98 You Tube Channel visits with 305 total upload views
- Countless numbers of photos and video documentation

### **Evaluating Our Implementation Processes**

Participants in the project were asked to detail some of the key challenges and strengths of *Illuminated by Fire*, as well as some of the roles played in the project. Some of the responses are summarised in the sections below.

#### *Roles of Stakeholders*

Stakeholders in the project, such as participants, Neighbourhood Houses and Regional Arts Development Officers, performed a number of tasks beyond just contributing to the final art work whilst working on *Illuminated by Fire*, including:

- "I'm one of the participating artists. I put together part of the memory box project. It's my first display."
- "We supported the artist and facilitated community engagement. We also covered some costs associated with the project."
- "Host for artist's project. Support artist' work and assist with publicity and exhibition."
- "My role in the... project has very much been about working with the local partner and developing the various partnerships in the project and the relationships in the project."
- "I was just an advisor cum sounding board, set up the original MoUs with the Neighbourhood Houses and the just occasionally touched base with the two artists..."
- "...a huge amount of artists support all the way through."
- "I did a lot of the set up and props making..."
- "I was involved taking some photographs."
- "Well I actually built the tree, designed it a bit and built it from scratch."
- "My role was to collaborate with Catherine, and to oversee it all with the Koori side of things."

The above examples demonstrate the range of role performed by those involved.

Additionally, all the project participants at a local level interviewed felt they were well supported by their local artist, with comments such as:

- "Oh, terrifically, yeah. Trevor's wonderful."
- "It was quite clear what Deanna was asking us to do and she was very helpful along the way and very much in contact with us, and yeah it was good."

- “Oh yeah. I'm usually very hard to get on with, I'm the sort of person that tells everyone to "Piss off and leave me alone to do my job". I just like to get on and do it.”
- “Anything that we wanted it was available pretty much straight away.”

### *The Challenges*

A number of challenges for the project were raised by a number of stakeholders, largely relating to communication and administrative procedures. Some comments indicative of this included:

- “We tended to get tied up in administrative stuff. I think there was an administrative overload, a burden. And the other element of that was that it was very much a one-size-fits-all thing as far as administrative ways of dealing with things.”
- “The line of communication was sometimes odd... it felt a bit like things were going around in circles or not very direct at times.”
- “Knowing (predicting) what would be required of the Centre at different stages of the project.”
- “...it felt like there should have been some production management support which I had to find locally but it felt like a number of projects could have done with that.”
- “...lack of insurance for the volunteers, the participants, which only came out towards the end because of the nature of using fire.”

There were also challenges unique to individual projects, such as:

- “Chasing up the stories for this was a lot harder for some reason. I just have found that when a project is not as intense emotionally that people go, 'oh yeah, I'll get around to it'”
- “There was an indigenous dance group who pulled out 2 weeks beforehand...”
- “Not everyone in the cast was reliable, and there were some people who were not reliable.”
- “One of the challenges was certainly working with a large institution.”
- “Sifting through memories was difficult for some.”
- “I think one of the largest contributing factors was my artist's availability and the fact they were Melbourne based artists... the artists that were coming in to my community relied on me to provide networks for them or to kick-start those network building opportunities.”
- “(In fire-affected areas) Infrastructure, how do we get, how do we feed, how do we house, we've got no really large big buildings, what do we do?”
- “The artist's demands. Once this project is over I have resolved never to work on any big projects where she is in charge - I don't think there is ever any excuse for rudeness to other people you work with...”

The majority of these challenges were addressed at the artist de-briefing session in December 2010 and will feed into the continually improvement of the project in 2011.

### *The Strengths*

Stakeholders identified a number of strengths of *Illuminated by Fire* in the Evaluation process, including:

- “Working with local artists who are aware of community issues and resources.”

- “One of the strengths of the project was it being state-wide and having so many projects! That was a real buzz for the audience and the participants.”
- “I think a lot of the artists who hadn't done a RAV project similarly got extended in their skills and will think more creatively and engage with their communities in a way that they haven't before.”
- “The artists were fantastic and the relationship that was developed with the artists and me as a project team was really strong.”

## EVALUATING STAGE THREE: DELIVERY OF TEN PROJECTS INTO FED SQUARE IN 2011

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### Theme One: Fire

Artists, participants and audiences were asked about the impact of the *Illuminated by Fire* project on raising awareness of fire in Victoria, in particular about the ability of the creative approaches to address a complex issue such as living with fire. Responses are summarised in the sections below.

#### *Developing a better understanding of the role of fire within local natural environments.*

Artists used a range of methods to address issues around fire and to assist Melbourne audiences to develop a better understanding of the role of fire within local natural environments. Examples provided by artists included:

- “Alan York and Kevin Tolhurst (the fire ecologists interviewed for the soundtrack) were very enthusiastic about collaborating with us because they valued the opportunity to have some of their complex work and idea presented to a broader audience with art.”
- “By representing footage of people using fire to cook with, by drawing focus to a real live wood burning stove and through children’s participation in scone/kettle boiling workshops, focus was placed on this complex issue.”
- “The memory boxes worked with people directly affected by the 2009 fires. The participants appreciated being given the opportunity to think about, discuss and create a sculptural work to represent their own experience.”
- “The CFA members interest and participation in photography helped meld the creative arts and fire.”
- “The sculpture/installation in the form of a ship’s hull filled with orchid forms raised questions of both destructive and regenerative use of fire. Many people came up to me and specifically stated they now felt they understood about the orchid in particular and its need for fire.”

Participants too felt that the project was a good way to share ideas about living with fire. Positive responses included:

- “[Fire management is] something that’s so widely talked about in the community already, it’s important to maintain the conversation. It’s sometimes hard to talk about the fire after such devastation so it’s great to have something like this to talk about.”
- “It’s been great how it raises awareness of fire; how fire is a part of our system and that it naturally happens.”
- “Absolutely, it’s been a great way to share ideas about fire, it’s been a very cathartic and memorable experience for me and others.”
- “It’s been a real eye opener, the artists and the artwork; it has all been really provocative.”
- “I can’t believe I was hanging out the washing this morning reflecting on how this performance has unexpectedly opened my eyes to the experience of fire on our lives. For example fire can be devastating but in contrast it can be a comfort.”
- “When we were casting hands it became a real social time, a good time to share our experiences, to come together at different times to talk about it.”

- “What was appealing right from the start was the opportunity to have a forum to turn something disastrous into something beautiful.”
- “It helped me talk about fire, about the event, what happened after the fire. It’s been hard on the community. So it was a good experience to get it out.”
- “Yes, it certainly has been. It’s made me think about fire in many different ways.”
- “Yes I think so, because it provides a different perspective, so I think it’s been great.”

#### *Developing a better understanding of fire within local natural environments*

Audience responses varied in terms of whether people felt that the project had increased understanding of fire in local environments. Surveyed at the site, comments included:

- “It helped to remind me that even though it’s been two years since the fires, people are still dealing with the consequences.”
- “It was interesting to see what different communities have done and their perspectives of fire.”
- “We talked to one of the ladies from Flowerdale and that was an experience. So yes. The scars on the psyche... Until you’ve met someone who has been in a fire it’s not the same, the understanding. Its talking to people, it’s caring.”
- “Yes, [this project helped me in] making the connection between bush regeneration and the cycle.”
- “Having never experienced a fire in my life, it’s been great to get a sense of it.”
- “It reinforced my understanding of the role of fire.”
- “It highlighted the community based aspect of fire... It also highlighted the danger it can pose.”
- “Yes you can see how it can be very destructive and how you can make use of it.”
- “It puts a different perspective on fire and the effects of it in different situations.”
- “Often when we think of fire, we think of bushfire, so the films opened my mind to how differently fire can be viewed.”
- “It’s given me a historical and contemporary feel of the role of fire.”

#### **Theme Two: Art**

The extension of arts practice for regional artists was a critical focus of the *Illuminated by Fire* project. The following sections detail some of the self-evaluation responses by artists and audience members, as well as participants, to this challenge.

#### *Extension of arts practice*

Artists unanimously agreed that the project extended their arts practice. Comments from artists included:

- “I’m looking at art in a new way. I’m looking at my practice in a new way. I’m feeling really creative and I wasn’t before. It was a struggle for me to think creatively and now I’m always coming up with new ideas, and I think they’re worth pursuing. I just didn’t do that before; I was a photographer but didn’t think of myself as an artist. I got a lot out of the community development, but now I’m also thinking of myself as an artist.”
- “First and foremost, it’s put us back into the realms of large scale theatre. I’d been avoiding it for quite a while. Doing this and realising it can be done with these sorts of

people in these situations has encouraged me to think about working in large scale theatre again.”

- “I’d like to do more work with people who have suffered trauma... It was really, really fantastic having that experience so I hope to do more.”
- “Before this project I hadn’t really written and arranged songs so that was great profiling for me... I really enjoyed performing as part of this project, I’d like to do more of that... In that way it’s extended my practice because while I’ve been involved in outdoor stuff, I’ve never led it and written it myself before. The process of working on these two parts of Illuminated by Fire has been good for me ... I’ve picked up a lot of skills and ways of working and confidence through this project.”
- “It encouraged me to communicate and to talk to people about the work.”
- “Working locally makes even greater sense to me following this project.”

A number of participants, also learned new skills from being involved in the Melbourne installation outcome of the project, as demonstrated by the following comments:

- “I learnt the magic of Ken Evans; his visual skills have been extraordinary.”
- “Working with shadows and light.”
- “I guess from a skills point of view, I learnt to work in a collaborative group with people who didn’t always have the skills.”
- “I learnt how to cast, Sharon and I did all the casting. Working with different mediums, I haven’t had the chance to be artistic for some time so the opportunity to have been a part of this installation with so many other artists showcasing, it was great to be a part of it all.”
- “I’m a photographer so I took that angle. I am a bit shy though, so it helped bring me out of my shell, taking photos of people’s struggles.”
- “I’ve learnt how to plaster cast; I’ve never done that before. I’ve learnt new ways of presenting work; I’ve never put materials in such an enclosed space before.”
- “This whole episode has not only taught me to deal with what’s happened, it’s helped me to deal with unresolved emotions to point where I feel there is some resolve and have been encouraged to heal.”
- “The management of resources. There have been lots of things to organise.”
- “This installation for me was about expanding my practical skill base, working with concrete and mosaic was my first attempt. The scale also was a learning curve.”

### *Astonishing art*

Artists were asked to explore whether or not they felt that their work was ‘astonishing’ and in what way their answer differs from last year: in what way has the venue/location of the work altered the impact of their work from their perspective. Comments from artists included:

- “I would say in terms of scale, yes. The intimacy of the three part girl group, and then having over 70 singers is pretty astonishing. I think being part of the final story of the night tours, singing outdoors with the narrative of the Portland ship and whaleboat. What was astonishing about that was the visual effect and the story that voices were able to tell about being outside by the Yarra. Just to reiterate, it was a totally different performance in Melbourne from Ballarat. It was astonishing because of the place it was in, and the scale of the work around it, I think.”

- “Yes, I do think it was a bit astonishing. It comes down to the situation of the first presentation [when it snowed], which was more guts than art, more stoicism than art because we didn’t want to let it go. To see the whole crew rise to that challenge was the astonishing part. This year it was astonishing for the audience. There was enough variety in the styles of performance. Because of the site and the situation, it allowed us to really push the idea and take it to its full culmination, to realise the initial vision. That came out of people really pushing and wanting to do it.”
- “Once people entered ArtPlay without expectations they were astonished, perhaps, to find such hospitality. I think the astonishment happened in the evening with the unexpected supper, and encountering amiable people holding tea pots.”
- “I think it looked amazing where it was, and it definitely had a bigger audience. As an entire work, considering it wasn’t made by one artist, it looked amazing in the space.”
- “Yeah, I think so. It’s confrontational and provocative as well as technically well constructed, as well as a challenging topic. Photographically and for the participants’ sense of pride, the venue really made a difference. One lady’s friend came from Vienna because her work was going to be in Fed Square.... One man came back 4 times!”
- Yes, I think it was astonishing, I would say that. It was more astonishing in Melbourne because we were compromised in Lakes Entrance by having to keep the work in the town, compromised by weather and cost and the site to a degree... Melbourne really showcased the work to its best capacity by having a second shot at realising the vision. I think it would be equally astonishing if it had’ve been realised in a bush setting.”
- “I think so, yeah. I’ve been looking for other examples of what I’m doing and I haven’t been able to find anything! There doesn’t seem to be any other work like what I’ve done and that’s pretty astonishing. The other difference from last year is that this time my work was up for 5 days which is great, and in a central place... The subjects of my photos look like country people. They don’t look like city people. Having a rural look in the middle of city is quite astonishing - in a place you wouldn’t expect. When we unrolled the banner in the BMW Edge as well, showing a brigade member in grubby shoes and grubby outfit – I think that looked pretty astonishing.”

Audience members interviewed after some of the performances in 2011 were universally impressed by the projects. Some comments included:

- “Stunning, what a clever way to capture an incredible amount of emotion.”
- “Exceptional ... the setting up of the house with the shadow work was outstanding.”
- “Outstanding and inspiring!”
- “I thought the whole exercise was a very powerful and moving effort. For me, the evening tour was where it all came together best. Congratulations to all involved. It was a great event.”
- “I actually came twice, Thursday night and tonight .... Overall I thought it was stunning.”
- “Very impressive, the whaling boat and the magnificent fire.”
- “The memory boxes were astonishing, yes ... It was surprising, original, and very individual.”
- “Really good. They sound terrific, very soulful.”
- “It feels very warm and welcoming.”
- “The black trunk and the light of the tree are amazing.”
- “Yes, I think it’s wonderful. It’s been very moving; the children’s hands are very moving.”

- “The mosaics from Kyneton have captured me.”
- “They are all great, very powerful. It was emotional, quite sad but also very respectful and resilient.”
- “It draws you into the warmth from the cold outside, it’s comforting, and it’s your living room where you’re interacting with your family.”
- “CFA posters from Maldon were great. How the artist used reflective tape on the artwork was brilliant.”

#### *The role of art in raising awareness of issues*

Participants in the projects were asked an additional question as to whether they felt art could be used to raise awareness of sensitive issues more generally, not just in relation to fire. Responses were positive, and included comments such as:

- “Art is a very good way of expressing issues. It’s entertainment with a message.”
- “Certainly. For example we’ve worked with asbestos and now fire, so certainly. Sometimes you can be more persuasive with song than argument.”
- “Art and comedy are probably the most non-confrontational ways to discuss sensitive issues.”
- “This type of art is personal and accessible, it really connects people in the country and the city.”
- “There are so many ways you can do it through art, so many ways you can express your feelings without even saying anything.”
- “Yes. Certainly I think it’s a really good non-political way of doing it. Art in its many forms transgresses political, religious and racial boundaries –a neutral territory where important issues can be explored.”
- “There’s a lot of stuff I generally won’t talk about myself and yeah, art has been a good way for me to get it out. It’s been good for recovery after a traumatic event.”
- “It makes people look at art in a new way, draws attention to sensitive issues”
- “Very much so. It’s a common ground.”
- “Definitely, again through different mediums this has happened, yes. I’m big on art, and this is the first time I’ve been a subject in a sensitive issue. It was interesting to be on the other side and to see how sensitive issues can be raised and affect the audience.”

### **Theme Three: Resilience**

It was important in measuring the success of the overall impact of *Illuminated by Fire* to examine the level of resilience it built in the communities which participated and hosted the 2010 local presentation and were represented in the 2011 installation in Fed Square. The sections below explore perceptions of attitudinal or behavioural change within participant communities as a result of the project, as well as longer term network and/or partnership building.

#### *Community resilience*

Artists outlined what they thought worked for the community, with comments including:

- “It has definitely impacted on the people that I worked with. Catherine Blakey said it helped her start working again as an artist. Sarah Hammond said it helped her focus on

what was important to her. Teesha said that opening night was the first time talking about her Memory Box that she didn't burst into tears. There has definitely been a sense of healing and wellbeing for the people I worked with. It was a starting point for people to talk to their families about what had happened, and in that way it's impacting on the community."

- "The community has seen us do something and have a little bit more respect for us. We're not just empty headed puppeteers mucking around. We're actually doing something that speaks and shows action and compliments the community. It benefits us a lot too. They have a much better idea now about theatre outside the proscenium arch, that it can encompass all sorts of elements. It has made theatre really accessible."
- "... An awareness of the importance of recording the history of stories around fire... I think people these days are more aware of the value of recording stories but in years to come it will be of increasing value as the population ages. Maybe now we are at the beginning of social documentation. It's also encouraging to the community to go out and talk to their parents and grandparents before they cark it, maybe that's an attitudinal change. It also gets people talking about their own experience of wood stoves."
- "For a lot of people, this has brought forward conversations about their final fire (if that's their choice), brought that conversation up with their families."
- "Sharing stories was the big one in this piece – it connected together and joined the dots between some really big concepts for the community to get their heads around."
- "I think that this is a very long ongoing journey and that this work probably couldn't have happened some years ago. It was very timely in that the collaboration between various artists had reached a point where we were able to execute something as big as this, and the community embraced that. They were ready for that too and they embraced it. The networks necessary to make something as big as this happen had been really fostered; I'd been really fostering them for 10 years... Collectively, people in small communities share a common pride when people accomplish something outside of our town. It reflects on everybody well, in particular from the point of view of reconciliation. All of that puts you in good stead for the next step forward."
- "It's a very tight community, and because they're part of a culture it doesn't make much of a change, but they have accepted an art throw-in like me. They understand the reason behind art a bit more now. It has changed their attitude towards art, being involved in art and appreciating art."
- "One of the things that really worked in terms of awareness of fire and the idea of resilience with fire was the reference to the orchids and the use of fire in an environmental sense... Both of the issues we were addressing, destructive and regenerative aspects of fire, there was a lot of discussion about that in the local community. I was aware of people talking about that as we were working on the project."

Participants outlined what they thought worked for the community, with comments including:

- "There are so many other artists; it's been a good networking opportunity."
- "I've worked with people I wouldn't have otherwise ended up working with."
- "I'm relatively new to this community so it's been a good way of meeting members of the community."

- “It’s opened up dialogue about fire and exposed the role of the local fire brigade.”
- “Through the medium of photography I’ve been welcomed into people’s lives, people’s homes. In this way I feel I’ve reached out to get to know the community.”
- “Through this I’ve made a lot of friends, I’ve come out of my shell a little bit.”
- “I’ve made more friends. When I started at his project I was very isolated in the community, to have this and to be able to engage with new people in creative ways has been great.”
- “It’s personalised the whole issue, the memory boxes have allowed us to share this experience with the public and the response has been very emotive. The nature of the work – the memories, the resilience of the community, the beauty of the environment and the bushland we live in – has been highlighted. It’s been important for others to see and hear about our experience. This has got people talking and thinking about fire and handling it as a force.”
- “There are a lot of artists in my area that I didn’t know about and a lot of artists who have come out of hiding after the event.”
- “We’re from a country town so a lot of people have said ‘oh, I’ve read such and such in the paper’. It’s got people talking.”
- “I’ve enjoyed the teamwork, the joy of working with people and being able to apply the skills I have. I’ve learnt more about Koori people and hadn’t considered that journey before, working with other communities.”
- “Deanna’s project has brought our community groups together to be more aware of our fire brigade.”
- “It’s extended my relationships with people in the community.”

### *Partnerships*

A means of measuring the long-term impact of the project in a community is new partnerships or networks developed. Artists gave examples including:

- “They all want to do another one! When we finished on Saturday and were having drinks, we came up with ideas for 3 more shows! It inspired them to want to participate in more works like this. It was beyond belief, we kept saying ‘Yeah, that would be a great show!’ They’re inspired to do more, and they’re also inspired to want to work with us. That’s the heartening thing, you know. They absolutely enjoyed it. It certainly triggered within them a whole way of thinking and working with ideas like this. You can’t buy that enthusiasm with professionals.”
- “Definitely my partnership with Sweet Mona’s choir. Also, Maryanne Sam is an untapped resource in Ballarat. She has a lot of skills and ideas about the Indigenous Community in Ballarat and she’s interested in setting up a performing group for Indigenous people in Ballarat. I think that is potentially an important relationship.”
- “This project has broadened the relationship between Aboriginal and non-indigenous communities. Those people from the non-indigenous communities that came on board were incredibly grateful and felt very privileged to be able to work with the Aboriginal artists, because the opportunity to foster sincere cross cultural relationships is not easy to find.”
- “I had been thinking about joining the CFA as a brigade member for a while but actually did it as a result of working on this project, this involvement changed my initial hesitation.”

- “With the DSE, definitely. They loved being involved and just couldn’t help enough!”
- “This project brought together youth in the school and showcased their talents, allowing them to take part actively in a kind of a performance in front of their community, the older members of their community. And it was done in a respectful and responsible manner. People really responded to that.”

Some of the challenges in partnerships for artists included:

- “Because the Ballarat choir couldn’t do the whole performance I had to go down the more difficult route of teaching all the songs to Melbourne choirs, whose connection to the material was therefore much looser. The Melbourne and Ballarat choirs only had a rehearsal together for the first time that day! The distance stuff made it impossible to get them all together. The logistical challenge is just about managing large numbers of people (choirs) who have come from different places.”
- “The greatest challenge is working cross-culturally and taking care of the particular needs of Aboriginal people when they’re taken away from their own home and community, on a domestic level. Also just being sensitive to the cultural protocols and always being open the fact that there’s no predictability because the demands on their lives are so different to ours... Also, the Koori mob don’t have any money, I was supporting them all week too... In saying that, I felt really pleased with how it all came out in the end. We achieved a great outcome with the members of the community being there.”
- “Chasing people up was a bit harder this time.”
- “So ArtPlay are set up for workshops, and I could be clear about that. But as for the evenings, it was bit more unknown and I couldn’t be as clear with them about what was going to happen. I expected it to be a bit more easygoing like a function in Dunkeld where things just flow and get done. I hadn’t anticipated the numbers, none of us had. It was great how ArtPlay put on additional staff, adapted to it with staff working late.”

#### *Future collaborations*

Artists gave examples of possible future collaborations arising from the project, including:

- “There’s movements here in Ballarat that would involve kids and community choirs singing about history and place – similar themes really. I’m sure something will come out of those projects. The outdoor songs in relation to history and place wouldn’t just be songs, but part of a narrative, outdoor site specific kind of thing. One of the important collaborations has been with the Neighbourhood House in Ballarat. That relationship has been extremely dynamic because of the woman there I was originally working with – she’s been throwing funding opportunities at me, and getting me involved in projects. Also the collaboration with Sweet Mona’s, the Aboriginal Co-op... and maybe there’s a future for the Flamettes!”
- “Hopefully yes, I’ve got a few ideas. I spoke to somebody last week who does sound and light installation, and having worked in this medium for this project, I’m thinking of doing more of it. I met this woman and saw her work and we said ‘oh, we should work together!’”
- One of the conversations we had was with the engine man Max Lewis. He had the best time ever being part of a show... We spun the idea to him that we might want to do something with him and the steam engine people, a show using engines. 3 months before he wouldn’t have understood the idea, the context wouldn’t have meant

anything to him. The fact that we employed the machine as part of the production meant that he could suddenly see the potential of community theatre. It has broadened his aspect of theatre and what you can achieve with theatre – he can see the potential of all the steam engine gear.”

- I’ve had a meeting with Peter Thompson (CFA and funeral director) and he’d like me to give workshops in Castlemaine where he is a funeral director – where there are creative people. He just thinks it would help people. He said ‘I could give you a space and a timeslot. We could provide a service.’ I think he wants to be seen to provide an art service for people who are organising their cremation vessel etc. So this project has opened up that possibility – perhaps I can provide an art service for cremation vessels for a fee, a commissioned art work.”
- “Definitely. It’s already happening, we’ve already got more funding for the next one – ‘Blow Up’- based on the 1970’s film called Blow Up. This project is keeping these partnerships going. To sustain the partnerships, you need to have the support of the arts industries, even more so regionally where there is limited arts infrastructure.”
- “Possibly with the Neighbourhood House, and the CFA. The CFA is the most well connected organisation out here... I’m also helping with the history celebrations for the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Maldon, and creating a Walmer history book.”
- “Hopefully yes, with Whittlesea Council. The artist books are really valuable as well, this project has led on to me doing memory books. I developed that format through this project. I guess it’s shown me a way of working with people who have suffered trauma.”
- “I’m working on the Dunkeld Scone-off that’s happening as part of the Discover Dunkeld festival in October, and the school will be involved in that. Also potentially ArtPlay, I think. We were just jesting about a jam making one, next time. I don’t think it’s going to happen, but it could potentially happen!”

### Quantitative Outcomes in Stage 3

#### *Regional communities involved*

- 10 regional locations; 45% outer regional and 55% inner regional
- 3 CFA brigades involved in the presentation

#### *Artists*

- 11 Project/local artists employed
- 1 Artistic Director
- 1 Curator of Stories/Symposium Director
- 82% of artists females, 18% male
- 7 art forms represented: sculpture; installation; film; theatre; projection; photography; music
- Over \$50,000 in artist fees and over \$22,000 in materials payment

#### *Participation and Audience*

- 10 local artists’ projects presented at Fed Square
- Over 278 participants directly involved
- Approximately 5,000 people in attendance over 5 days

### Media

- Over 40 media stories in mediums including online, radio, and print as at July 2011
- 190 Facebook 'Friends', with 3,670 total page views
- 62 Twitter Followers
- 1,960 absolute unique visits to the *Storyboard* website from August to December 2010
- 152 You Tube Channel visits with 450 total upload views
- Countless numbers of photos
- 14 minute Event Reel and 4 minute Artwork Reel - video documentation

### Evaluating Our Project Design and Delivery Processes

Artists were asked to detail some of the key challenges and strengths of *Illuminated by Fire*. Some of the responses are summarised in the sections below.

#### Challenges

- "In the first year the artist's fee should have been higher."
- "The OH&S in Fed Square was really difficult and wearing and we were exhausted when we came on site. It took my focus away from being the Artistic Director. We developed production planning manuals, but went into meetings where it seemed these hadn't been read so our processes were frustratingly different. Where it all came together was at a budget meeting where we put the budget on a screen and made decisions about the costs of each line item - then it began to feel like a real partnership."
- "In 2010, I didn't understand why we needed such a detailed Production Manual, but I understood why we needed one for Fed Square and we worked hard to prepare it really well with lots of detail. In Fed Square, we would often find ourselves dealing with people who just hadn't read the manuals and this was very frustrating and time consuming."
- "RAV is a not-for-profit arts organisation and Fed Square is a very different body with a different focus. Where our conversation would begin with the art and community engagement, they were thinking firstly about technical, budgetary and risk management issues. It was really important for us to work through their needs but also to ensure that we had the time and space to focus on our needs as well so that these elements weren't lost."
- "Communicating on the site was a challenge just because it is so big. Having lunch ready to be made in the Green Room made it easy to communicate."
- "There is a different way of doing things in the country – the OH&S is more relaxed. In Melbourne we needed to work with Parks Vic and to satisfy them that we knew what we were doing we needed to employ Right Angle Events and Show FX – so there was a disconnect with the way Carmel would have like to do it and the way I knew we had to do it."
- "Getting music rights was a challenge, expensive and it took a long time. I learned a lot but next time I would write all my own rather than pay so much to use someone else's."
- "I felt that we hadn't properly briefed the artists on all the legal paperwork that needed to be signed so that we had some issues on the ground in making the processes smooth especially around participant release forms. We now have a comprehensive suite of all

the forms and documents that will be needed and use the first briefing session to go through all these with the artists involved.”

*The support provided by the project structure to the artist*

- “Sharing food throughout made everyone feel welcome, it was fantastic.”
- “The briefing meetings gave me everything I needed to be working in my local community.”
- “Having Donna on the end of the phone, someone with a bigger picture of the work, someone to bounce ideas off was really wonderful.”
- “Having a production co-ordinator role at RAV was amazing. As artists we didn’t have to bother the Artistic Director with simply practical things, Joe then later Julia were there and easy to reach. There was a smooth transition from Joe to Julia.”

*Other successes for the artists*

- “The connection with other artists from around the state was invaluable. Often the little conversations are so rich and fantastic. Being part of this larger cohort of artists has challenged me to think differently about my work. It has given me a wider perspective.”
- “Post IbF collaborations: Ken Evans and Rebecca Russell are planning to work with Catherine Larkins in Nowa Nowa.”
- “It was a real confidence boost to see the level of commitment from Donna and RAV both financially and working through the red tape with getting the boat installation on the Yarra happening. I felt really valued and respected as an artist.”
- “The residence period in Fed Square was really enjoyable. The Fed Square staff were all fabulous, very supportive and Donna and Julia were calm and happy. I thought it was going to be a tough few days but it was stress free and enjoyable.”

Participants were also asked a range of questions and general themes are captured here.

*Did you feel appropriately support by the project’s design and structure?*

- “Yes very much, so constant communication general support all around.”
- “Yes I did. As a participant we were given heaps of information about the project the different stages. They were made very clear. We kept contact via email, face to face, phone calls.”
- “Yes. Pretty happy with it all from a local community point of view, lots of support and from Regional Arts Victoria.”
- “Yes the information all through the project was very clear.”
- “Sometimes the communication between Fed Square people not knowing where it was going to go was difficult.”
- “Yes, the main support was by being kept informed through the planning and being informed of any changes.”
- “Yes extremely well organised, we seemed to have everything we needed.”
- “We started off in a group with discussions, ours was a sensitive issue and we were all supportive of each other.”
- “Yes. Ken’s been really clear about what we set out to do which was to raise awareness using art.”
- “Yes. Donna has been great doing load of trips and Lindy’s been great.”

*Did you feel that your role and responsibilities were clearly defined by the artist?*

- “Yes of course. I am the woodchopper; I get to show everyone how it’s been done over the while.”
- “Yes, I was specifically asked what to do, I supervised the making of the wings, and the drawings of finches were mine.”
- “Yes the aim was to create these boxes within the dimensions the subject matter was left up to us as the individuals.”
- “Yes the artist was really adamant of the quality of the works they had to be of a high standard. Essentially it was up to us to decide how much a part of this we wanted to be. I produced an artwork shown by Kyneton, I made the doll.”
- “Yes. The technical design and production of the ship and also the management of the whale boat was my area. Carmel relied on my judgment; I’m a bit of technocrat.”
- “As a performer a little unclear at the beginning, it cleared up towards the end though.”
- “Yes my roles were clearly defined. My role was to coordinate the display work at Maldon.”
- “Yes I was told to go for it. I built the tree.”
- “Yes, with the mosaic project we had a clear idea of requirements and what to do.”
- “I was to be a performer/singer in a script written by Tracy we learnt the script, we had rehearsals with the performers, and I’ve worked in this industry before and I would have to say it felt professional and well-co-ordinated.”
- “Yes very much so. We knew exactly what we were doing, my role was construction transportation.”
- “Yes. My role was to photograph members of my brigade during their daily activities.”
- “It was a personal journey; Leanne was there to support that it. It was made very clear it was our work and that it was done in our own time when we were ready to process it how we wanted.”
- “Yes, definitely. My role was to fit sails to the boat, which came from my boat- I laced them, attached them, my expertise is in tying knots, I did a lot of handling of support craft, moving water craft around, all things nautical, watching the tides, staying on top of these things.”
- “Very clearly defined. I was responsible for my part of the show, bump in and bump out too.”
- “Yes, we all worked very closely. I feel Sharon’s project would work well working with a new medium and facing those problems we worked as a team, I enabled Sharon’s project to be realised.”

*Did you learn anything about project design and delivery from this project?*

- “I thought art was a bit farty but now it doesn’t seem so bad.”
- “I’ve learnt how much work appears to go into a project.”
- “Our project was a different aspect of fire and I learnt a lot from the process yes. It was hard to work on this project without upsetting someone because it’s a delicate subject. The 10 week process was a real journey and some struggled.”
- “It confirmed my love and firm belief that long term planning is paramount.”
- “Yes it’s complicated to do a show with lighting, that was informative.”

- “Just as an observer, seeing all the intricate steps to a project getting it up, displaying the objects, I learnt to appreciate the process.”
- “The insight I would have to say is that it is an evolving project, and as time went on it became alive, and everything became clearer.”
- “Yes I got to see a lot of the project at the beginning, and got to see how the project evolved.”
- “Yes. I learnt the magic of Ken Evans; his visual skills have been extraordinary.”
- “We learnt a lot every time we worked with Donna. We are amazed at how she can bring seemingly unrelated things into a whole.”

*Anything else that really worked for you as a participant?*

- “Getting our story here.”
- “Leanne suggested I weave a wire basket to sit in the installation so I took it on –no one else is probably aware of this but it took a lot of time to make! It forced me to sit down, breathe, reflect on the journey and make this basket and it was a tough time then, I was having to look at houses and was basically trying to get through the re-building process after the fires. Something like the weaving of the basket, as hard as it was to make, was a good time for me to contemplate and affirm what it was that I, that we, were doing. I also designed and produced the company memory booklet which was a learning experience.”
- “Kathryn put a lot of work into some of the artists simply because the issue around the theme was so delicate and perhaps at this point unresolved. There is resolution now the journey has brought us to this point. It was a good way for people to deal with their loss.”
- “The co-operation between everyone, RAV, Parks Vic the organizations have been great.”
- “The lack of pressure, it seemed to be the right amount of information and expectation at the right time.”
- “It was all cohesive even though all projects were unique.”
- “The amazing enthusiasm which rubbed off on the rest of us participants.”
- “The ability to engage with people from very different backgrounds to deliver a great outcome.”
- “The way the project was very local, kept personal to the land.”
- “The support from the co-ordinators.”
- “Seeing the exhibition in this environment has highlighted how valuable the works are for our community, this fire art. It’s really great to see it acknowledged.”
- “The introductions of the artists have been really important everything has been laid out really well with the maps and things.”
- “When all the fires were going at once.”

*Was there anything about the project design and delivery you thought might have been done better?*

- “The last minute changes the night before.”
- “Organisation and communication at the early stages.”
- “Can’t say because it’s been the first time I’ve been involved in a project like this, so I can’t say.”

- “I think maybe, advertising.”
- “If I did it again, I would meet more with other artists from other areas and meet the higher up individuals who helped organise it.”
- “Advertising. In the community outside of the direct collective. So in Melbourne itself.”
- “Finances have been the main concern. Many hours of our time, it was very expensive in time. So yeah, more money would have been good!”
- “I’m involved with promotion, advertising so I guess if you weren’t in the arts circle I feel it was hard to know about it, perhaps a lead time, a week before to let people know about it. Possibly when I do promotions isn’t always in the arts field.”
- “Not really, other than the pay of the co-ordinating artists, which I think needs to be looked at.”
- “I don’t think we could have improved on it. There were so many factors, the tides were against us, this and that but we all stuck together, that was great.”