

Sustainable Neighbourhoods

WASTE to ART EXHIBITION

Waste to Art

Project evaluation, 2020

Waste to Art is a community art project designed to challenge the way we look at waste. The exhibition presents works created by school groups, individuals and community artists exploring ideas about waste, litter and over-consumption.

The 2020 exhibition highlighted a range of waste issues and demonstrated creative ideas to reconsider, reuse and upcycle the materials we use in our everyday lives. Utilising a fun and creative medium such as a community art exhibition gives our message more impact than more traditional education and engagement campaigns.

In its third year as a citywide project, the exhibition successfully showcased high quality artworks, created by community members from preschool students through to professional artists. The project was originally inspired by two previous art exhibitions run by Sustainable Neighbourhood groups in West Wallsend District and Caves Beach – Swansea Area.

The 2020 Sustainable Neighbourhoods Waste to Art project engaged with more than 130 local artists and showcased 40 artworks.

Of course, 2020 was a challenging and disrupted year in many respects, with health and gathering restrictions changing regularly. We were disappointed to be unable to hold a launch event this year.



Rubbish Reef by Caves Beach Crop Swap. Image: Mardi Lee

Artist numbers increased with participation from a number of school and preschool groups. We exhibited fewer artworks than in previous years, allowing space for appreciation of each piece, and avoiding clutter in a relatively small space.

Promotions for the project were improved this year, with the enthusiastic work from key volunteers, increasing our digital reach by 40%.

Waste to Art objectives

- Increase the Lake Mac community's awareness and understanding of local waste issues including plastic pollution, marine debris, littering and resource consumption.
- Engage, challenge and stimulate the Lake Mac community, including school students, through creative exploration.
- Encourage the community to place a positive value on waste as a resource.
- Encourage participation in community programs that will address waste issues, such as Sustainable Neighbourhoods, Eco Angels etc.
- Showcase the Lake Mac community's creative endeavours and encourage participation by local young people.
- Develop partnerships with Council, local businesses, schools and other community organisations.



Healing Robots by Stephen Allen.

Image on right: Mardi Lee





Barnacles, Moonlit Sea and Tide marks, from the series I love her jewel sea by Diana Boyd

Artist participation

More than 130 artists were involved in creating the 40 artworks for the exhibition.

Number of individual artists	22
Number of artist groups	
Groups included: Caves Beach Crop Swap, Clear Sky Australia, New Lambton South Public School Stage One, Belmont North Preschool, Two Guys Fishing, Caves Beach Uniting Preschool and Dudley Public School Year 6	7 groups
Number of group members	116
Total number of artists	138

Visitor numbers

We estimate that just over 600 people visited the exhibition, between 28 October – 13 December 2020. This is more than in 2019 for the SEEN@Swansea space.

Due to covid restrictions and venue closures, our only exhibition opportunity was at SEEN@Swansea.

In previous years we have been able to hold additional small exhibitions at public events (eg Council’s Living Smart Festival) and the library Launchpad spaces, which resulted in much higher visitor numbers for the project overall.



Coral by Clear Sky Australia. Image: Mardi Lee

Exhibition impact

The exhibition delivered a powerful message about waste and overconsumption. Some examples of messages left in the guest book include:

“Such work is a testament to human creativity and the desire to no longer be a throw-away society.”

“So very clever and thought provoking. Say no to plastic.”

“Great art and use of every day materials that we take for granted. Very inspiring.”

“Fantastic use of discarded materials and rubbish. Very inventive, original, artistic and great craftsmanship.”

“Wow! Quality is wonderful. Very inspiring.”



Upper left: Soft drink bottle “Snail” necklace
Left: Soft drink bottle “Disc” necklace
Soft drink flower coloured vessel
By Kay Pittelkow

Artworks

The artworks spanned a variety of materials and forms, including beautifully crafted sculptures, wearable works and jewellery, paintings, collages, furniture, and more. The works reflected the diversity of artists spanning wonderfully colourful works from pre-school groups, to intricate finely crafted pieces.

A selection of the works is shown throughout this document. The details of the complete exhibition are available at sustainableneighbourhoods.org.au/2020-exhibition-guide.

Project management

The project was managed through the Sustainable Neighbourhood Alliance, with key administrative and marketing tasks delivered by two Sustainable Neighbourhood volunteers. We are very grateful to Tristan and Mardi for taking on these management roles, and for their excellent work to make the project a success.

The Alliance Secretariat provided oversight and administration assistance, and a number of volunteers assisted with exhibition installation and pack down. Staff from Council's Arts, Culture and Tourism department assisted with logistics. Council assisted with promotion of the project.

The exhibition terms and conditions were based on previous years, with two categories: sculptural or functional; and imagery.

The exhibition was deliberately kept as an exhibition only, rather than including any competitive aspects like judging or prizes. This reflects the nature of the project, as being primarily a way to educate and raise awareness about waste issues, and to encourage broad community participation. The non-competitive nature of the project keeps the focus on participation over prize-winning.

Initial project planning was underway in February-March, including consideration of new project components including art-making workshops, shopping centre displays, Launchpad displays and more. However, the disruption of Covid-19 resulted in just the October exhibition proceeding.

Registrations opened in April, allowing participating artists opportunity to develop their ideas, collect materials, and create their works.

We are grateful for support from Council to run the project. The project was also supported through a NSW EPA Waste Less, Recycle More initiative, funded from the waste levy.

We would like to acknowledge and extend our appreciation of the artists who participated enthusiastically and contributed their works for the exhibition.



Recycled Skate Wood by Ben Gibson.
Images: Mardi Lee



Promotions

Promotion of the project was mainly digital. Invitations to participate were emailed to previous participants, artist organisations, community groups, Council staff, Council's sustainable schools newsletter and the Sustainable Neighbourhood network in early March 2019. The project was also promoted through social media channels (Sustainable Neighbourhoods and Council), as well as various Council e-newsletters such as the Eco Advocate and Creative Lake Mac.

A significant addition to the project promotion this year was a series of videos created in a volunteer capacity by Mardi. Mardi created a total of seven promotional videos, including two long-form videos (1-3min), and five shorter videos.

The first long video was an in-depth artist profile about Melinda Hicks who exhibited her wearable art in the 2019 exhibition, and again in 2020. The second video showcased a local resident, Sam, who talked about the impacts of waste, and the value of the Waste to Art project. The series of shorter videos included artist interviews showcasing 2020 artists and their works.

The videos were an excellent way to engage with our supporters online, and to bring additional depth and interest to the Waste to Art message.

We estimate that digital Waste to Art promotions had a cumulative reach of more than 38,000 in 2020, a 40% increase from the previous year.

A media release was distributed through the Alliance and Council, resulting in stories published in the Newcastle Weekly and Newcastle on Hunter. A small number of hard copy fliers were distributed by participating artists.



Deep Sea Giant and Rainbow Waters by Dudley Public School, Year 6
Image: Mardi Lee

Estimated digital reach

Sustainable Neighbourhoods Facebook posts (cumulative)	26,823
Waste to Art Instagram posts (cumulative)	2051
Council social media posts (Facebook, Instagram and Twitter)	9208
Council Eco Advocate enewsletter	6868
Sustainable Neighbourhood News	1489
Waste to Art enewsletter	124
Total estimated digital reach	38,082

Project schedule

Feb – March	Project planning – Finalisation of dates, terms and conditions, promotional content
April - May	Registrations open Invitation to participate sent to various networks Promotion and inspiration to participate – social media campaign
June - August	Ongoing promotion - create an artwork Reminder email to registered artists - Request for info about artworks and progress photos
September	Registrations closed 30 September. Works completed and photos submitted. Compile artwork info
October - November	Delivery of works Exhibition installation Ongoing promotion – visit the exhibition
December - January	Exhibition close and pack up Project evaluation



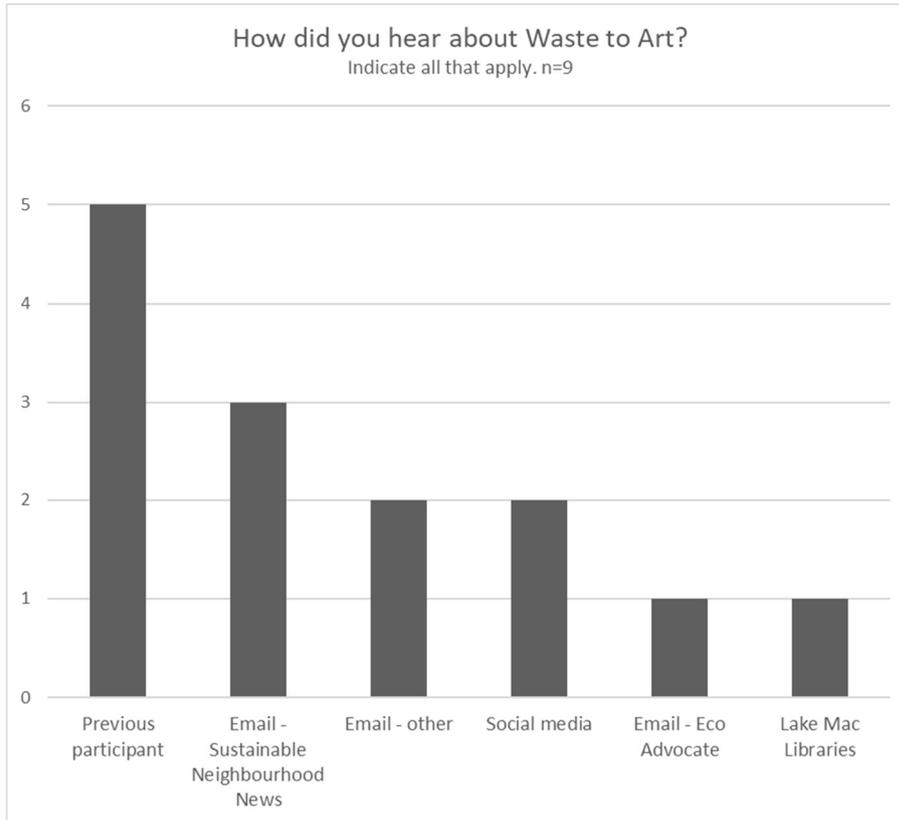
La Belle by Julie Moakes

Artist feedback

A feedback survey was sent to all artists following the exhibition, and received 9 responses.

Artist recruitment

Artists mainly heard about Waste to Art as a previous participant and through the Sustainable Neighbourhood News.



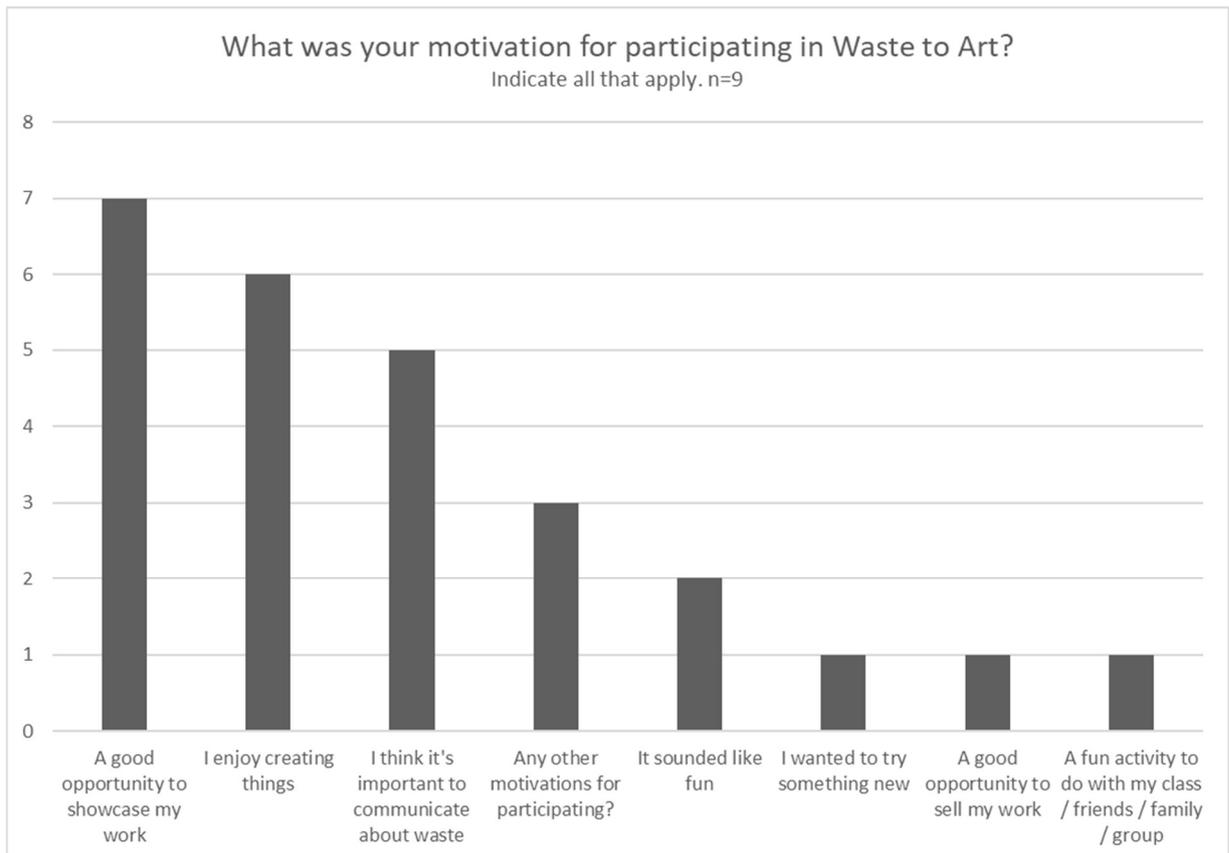
TICKA and
SQUID by Jeff
Carr



Motivation to participate

Most artists were motivated to participate to showcase their work (78%); because they enjoy creating (67%); and because it's important to communicate about waste (56%). Other motivations included:

- *Great to inspire our artists at Yara Balba Stables to join in!*
- *Wastes material makes the best resources for art projects. zero cost, zero waste*
- *Encourage people to redefine what waste is with the view of giving perceived waste items a 2nd and more permanent life.*



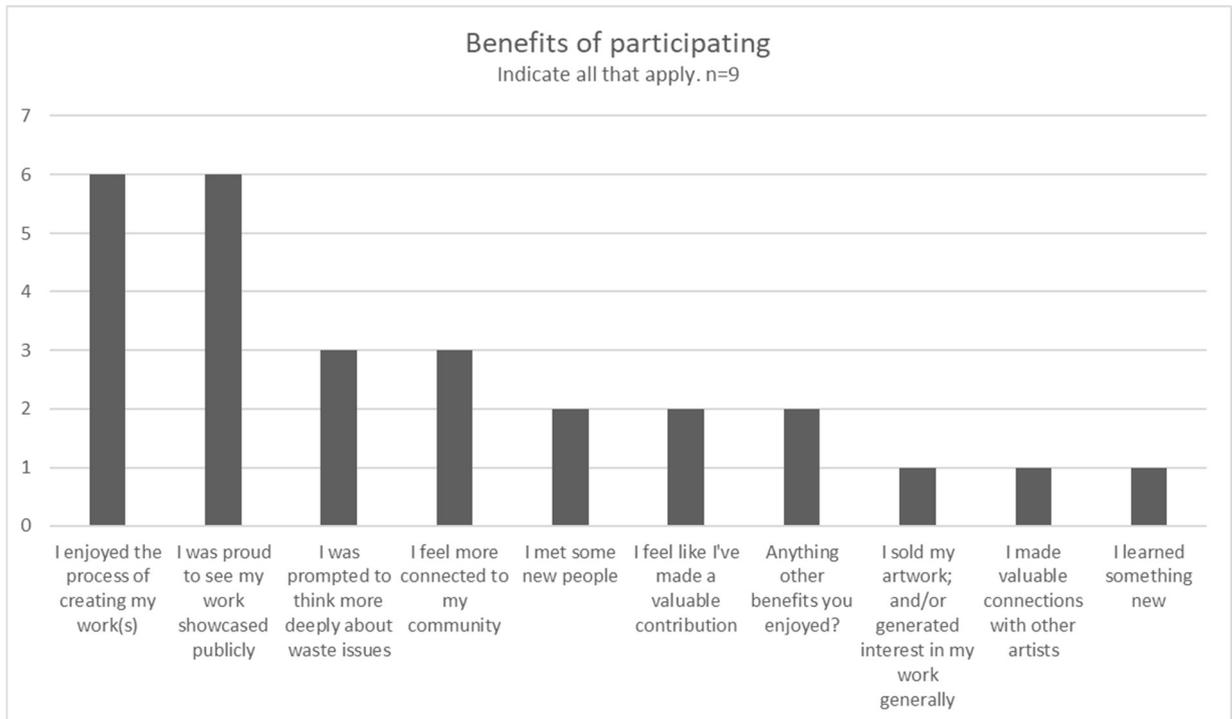
The Dingle Dangle Rubbish Scarecrow by Belmont North Preschool. Images: Mardi Lee



Benefits to participants

Artists enjoyed the process of creating their works (67%); and were proud to see their artworks showcased publicly (67%). Additional benefits included:

- *I donated the work to a group of actively engaged young people for their city backyard to prompt discussion about waste and recycling*
- *It helped me see the creative potential of waste from how other artists used it in skilled and imaginative ways.*

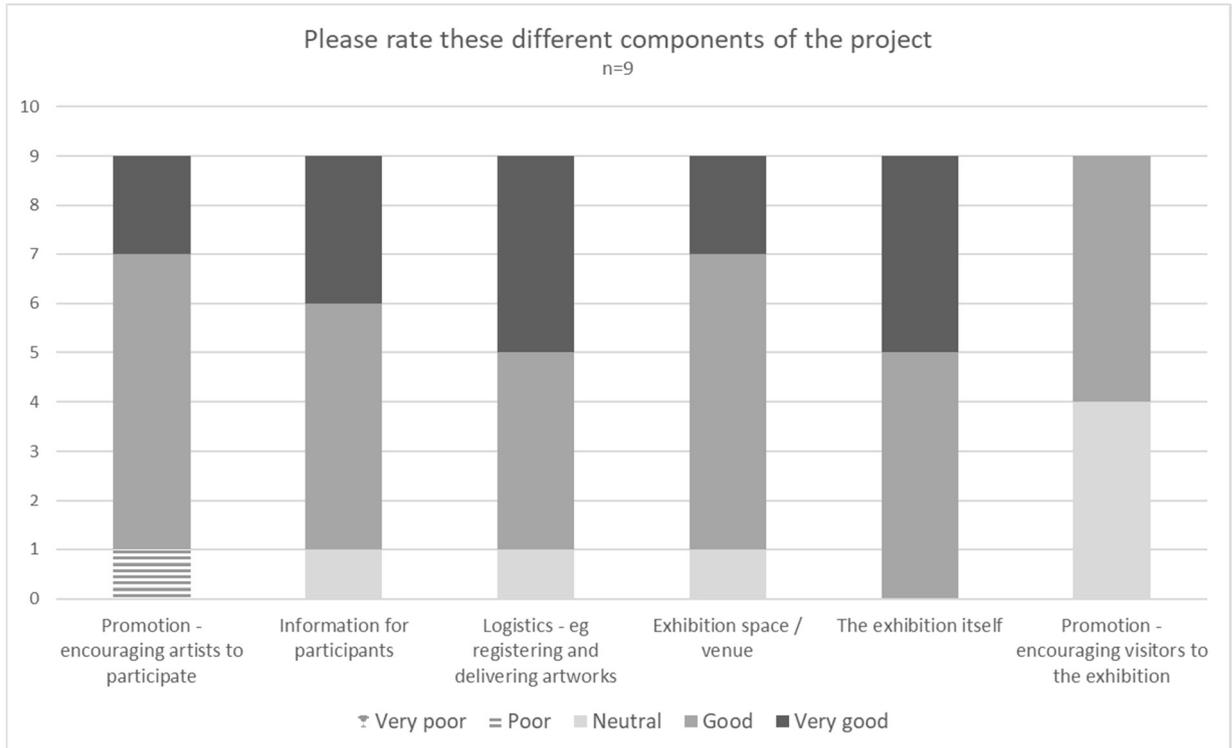


Rubbish Collector Jellyfish
by Caves Beach Uniting Preschool

Project management

All artists rated the exhibition itself as good or very good. Most other project components were rated good or very good by more than 89% of survey respondents.

Project promotion was identified as a key area for improvement, including both encouraging artists to participate and encouraging visitors to the exhibition.



Cellules en Plastique by Tracie Axton.
Images: Mardi Lee



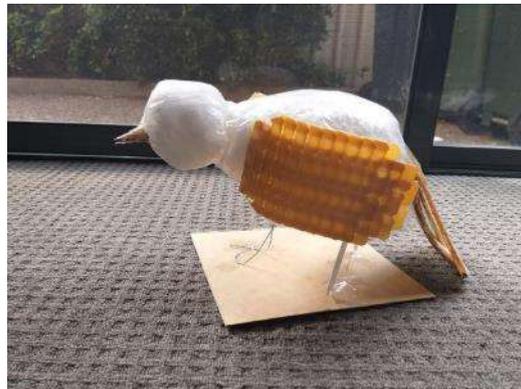
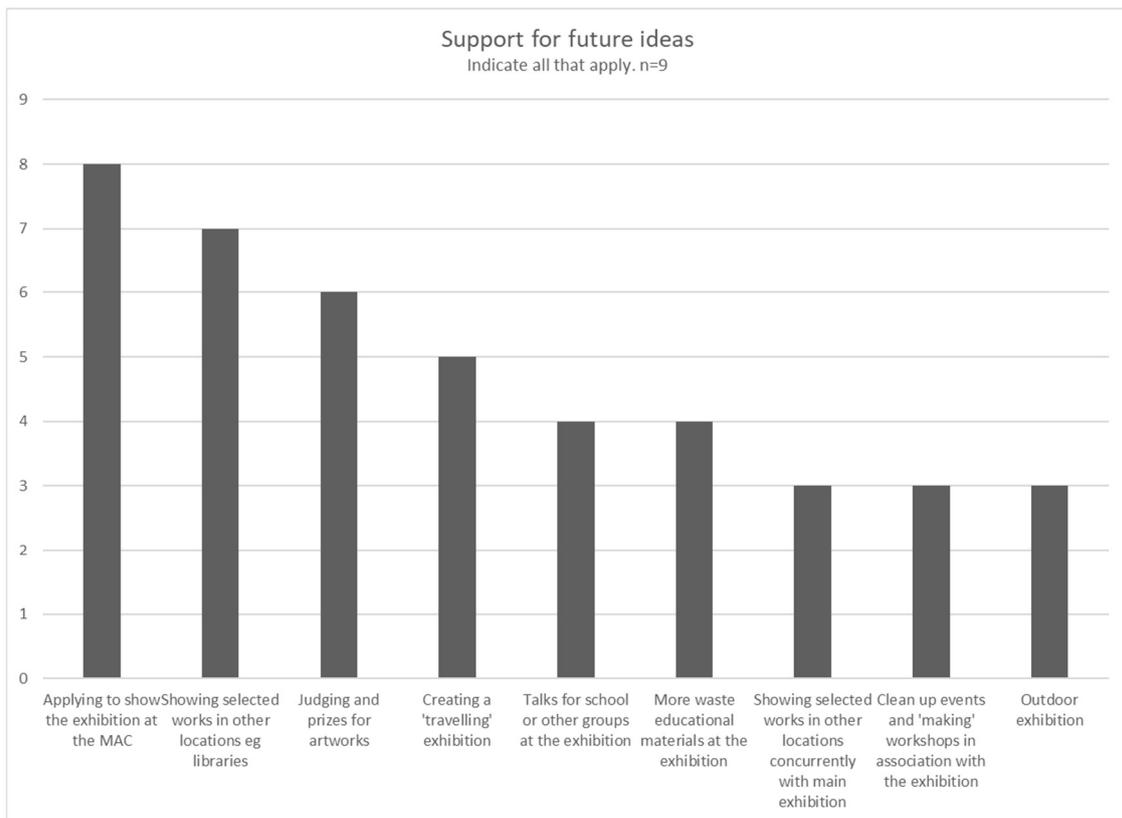
Future ideas

More than 50% of survey respondents supported ideas such as:

- Applying to show the exhibition at the MAC (89%)
- Showing selected works in other locations eg libraries (78%)
- Judging and prizes for artworks (67%)
- Creating a travelling exhibition (56%)

Additional ideas included:

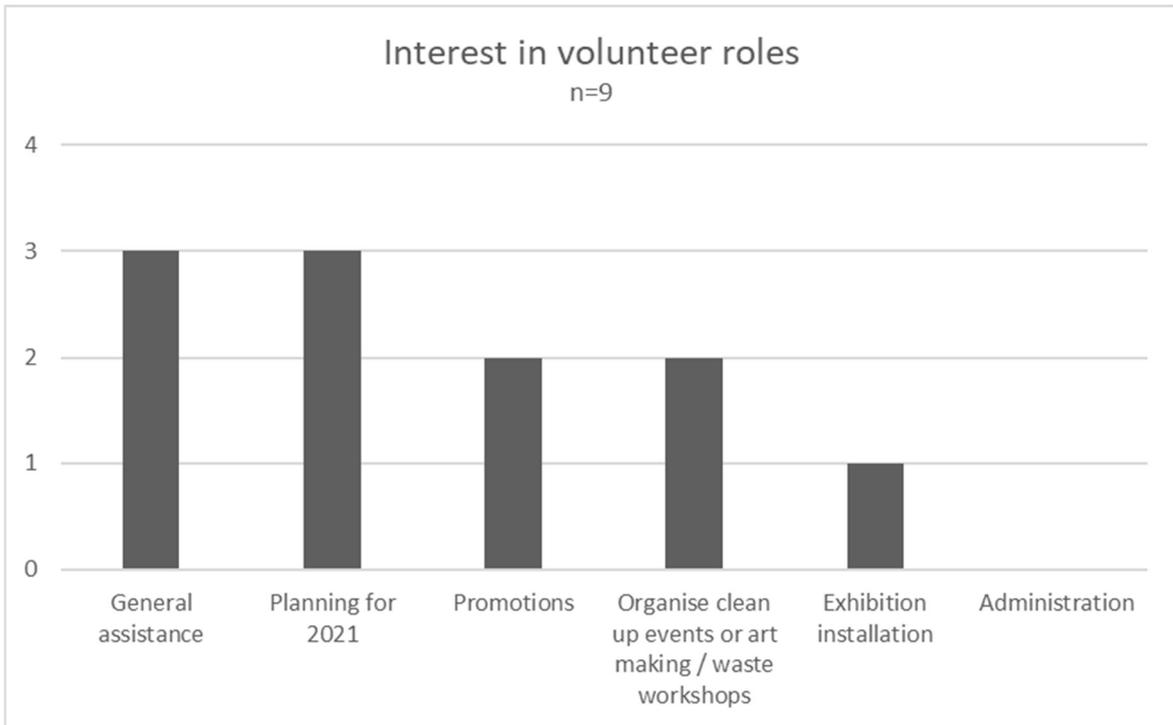
- Promote Waste to Art more to get more publicity. It is an amazing idea and it encourages others to become more environmentally friendly.
- I would love to see an outdoor sculpture exhibition
- Perhaps connect with the “Street Bounty” Facebook groups
- Prizes are always a good incentive to get more people involved.



Hermit Crab
and Seagull by
Alexandra
Cottle

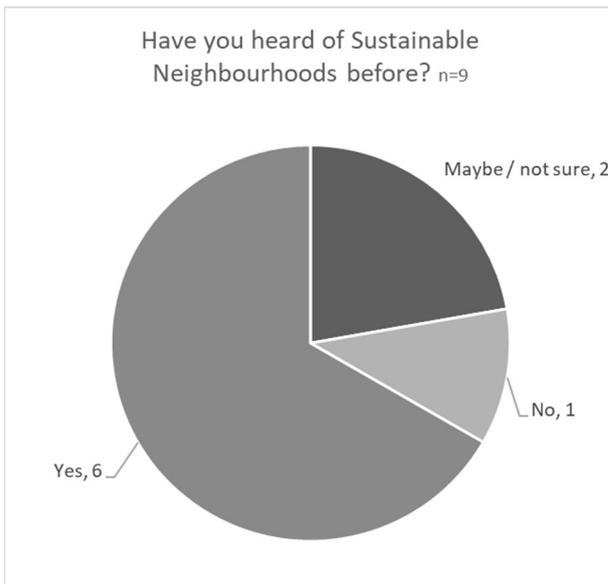
Volunteer roles

Three artists indicated that they would be interested in taking up a volunteer role for the project in future.



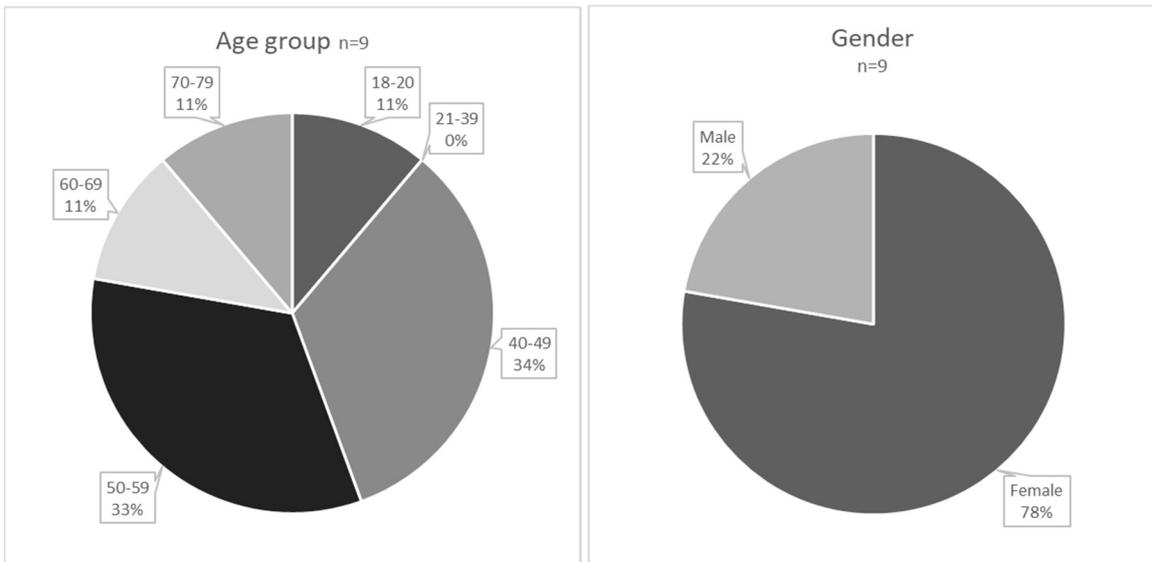
Awareness of Sustainable Neighbourhoods

Most respondents, 67% had heard of the Sustainable Neighbourhoods program before being involved in this year's Waste to Art exhibition.



Scorpion by Brendon Ussher

Artist demographics



Survey respondents came from the following postcodes:

- 2264 Morisset x 2
- 2265 Cooranbong
- 2281 Swansea
- 2283 Toronto
- 2287 Wallsend
- 2290 Charlestown
- 2317 Salamander Bay



Blue light chromatics by Tammy Briggs