

# MEDIA RELEASE

## For immediate release

From: Catherine Butterfield, Media and Communications Consultant, Mercy Health

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## Drawing positives from art therapy

Mercy Mental Health consumers, staff and volunteers bared their souls across the walls of the Clare Moore Building in recognition of Mental Health Week at the Mercy Mental Health annual art show last week.

Many of the works of art were created during art therapy classes, a type of therapy that Mercy Mental Health offers in the Clare Moore Building.

The walls were covered with pictures of leopards, self-portraits, objects from nature and patterns, as well as words and images of encouragement and support, but the final pieces of art that were on display were not the most important part of the creative process, Art Therapy Masters student Marni Harris said.

“Art therapy uses the artistic process in a therapeutic way,” she said. “So rather than focusing on the end product and the aesthetics of how the final artwork looks, the most significant part is the process of how it felt making the piece and how you respond to your final image.

“Art therapy is particularly good for people who might struggle to communicate verbally. There’s also an embodied sense to it so it bypasses that verbal part of the brain and you can really tap into emotional or bodily experiences in a way that is less cognitive.”

The art show was not only a recognition of Mental Health Week, but also a celebration of the work that people undertook during their own recovery, Mercy Mental Health Program Director Shannon Lang said.

“Whenever you have an opportunity to tap into an individual’s strengths or skills in a way that people feel they are being seen as more than their mental illness, then that is really valuable and a critical part of recovery,” she said.

Mental Health Week started on 5 October, while World Mental Health Day was recognised on 10 October. The Australian campaign aims to challenge perceptions about mental illness in Australia and encourages everyone to look at mental health in a more positive light, in an effort to reduce stigma and make way for more people to seek the help and support they deserve.

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