

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## Arts OutWest trains *Musicians in Hospitals*

**Arts OutWest has trained six people from the Central West to work as specialised *Musicians in Hospitals*. The training took place June 26 and 27 at Parkes Hospital.**

“The trainees are all experienced musicians and many have backgrounds in health or social work, but this training was something new for everyone. **One participant described it as ‘life changing’**,” Arts OutWest executive director Tracey Callinan said.

After a 2016 pilot music in hospitals program in Parkes and Forbes, Lachlan Health Service got funding from NSW Health for Arts OutWest to run this new training for local professional musicians.

Six musicians from across the NSW Central West were selected from a long list of candidates. They were Blair Gough (from Woodstock), Drew Farrant-Jayet (Parkes), Leah O’Rourke (Parkes), Stephan de Wit van der Merwe (Parkes), Kenneth Smith (Orange) and Karina Hill (Orange).

The two-day training program included video link-up sessions with UK-based experts Opus and with music therapist Kerrie Davies. Training covered techniques for engaging by the bedside, ethics, suitable repertoire and working with health professionals. The trainees also undertook practical experience in the Hospital.

“This type of program is not ‘music therapy’ and it’s not performance, it’s about a close intimate interaction using music,” Ms Callinan explained. “This can be difficult, challenging work but it’s also very rewarding work,” she said.

Their practical sessions took the musicians to a variety of places in the hospital – rehabilitation, general wards, including people in palliative care, and even playing to a newborn baby.

“There’s a wide body of research that live music experiences can have beneficial outcomes for people in hospitals and aged care,” Ms Callinan said. “For patients, visitors and staff this kind of music interaction can be fun or a welcome distraction, but it can also - as our trainee musicians found - be quite emotional. The musicians had some amazing responses during their sessions at Parkes Hospital last week.”

The musicians will complete their training with follow-up, supervised sessions at other local hospitals or aged care facilities. The trainees were paid for their participation in the program.

Arts OutWest is now looking at funding or donations to repeat this training for more musicians and looking at paid opportunities for the trained musicians to work in hospitals and aged care facilities around the region.

“There’s been a huge amount of interest in this program, including enquiries from inter-state,” Ms Callinan said. “We’re excited by the possibilities of this work.”



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