

Art in Health

The Austin & Repatriation Medical Centre Arts Program has been unique amongst Australian hospitals in the scope of activities undertaken, ranging from exhibitions, acquisitions and loans of artworks, commissions, artists in residence, major ward refurbishment and musical and performing arts activities. The program is the result of separate programs operated previously by the Austin Campus and Repatriation Campus which were joined following amalgamation on 1 April 1995. A professional Arts Administrator was responsible for its development and management and while the main focus is on the arts, there are significant links to the historical and cultural programs.

These initiatives have been implemented over a number of years in order to improve the appearance and ambience of the Medical Centre, making it less intimidating and utilitarian, and more attractive and user friendly for patients, families and staff creating a holistic health care environment. There is a growing recognition that holistic health has a positive and therapeutic effect on patients, counter balancing some of the stresses intrinsic to a period of hospitalisation.

The Coronary Care Unit has incorporated a holistic health approach into its ward design. They have combined traditional health care with aromatherapy and an environment conducive to healing. Through the arts program, artists in residence refurbished the ward.

The art collection within the Medical Centre is substantial, comprising paintings, drawings, original prints, photographs, tapestries, mosaics, stained glass, sculpture and some decorative arts. Many of these are contemporary and are the results of specific commissions, made possible through extensive, targeted fund raising efforts, donations, grants and bequests. The collection includes many public works of cultural significance. External financial support from a range of sources has been received in the past and was generated by the Arts Administrator.

