

MEDIA RELEASE

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Messengers '17 exhibition showcases benefits of arts based early intervention

A new exhibition opening this week at Tuggeranong Arts Centre will showcase work by students in the Centre's Messengers Program.

The Messengers Program is an arts based early intervention program for young people who are experiencing early signs of anxiety, depression and other mental health issues. The program also assists young people to explore personal and gender identity.

The program works with young people aged 12-25 years using an arts based approach that builds resilience, improves mental health and young people's acceptance of their diversity.

Messengers employs professional artists and support workers, as well as peer mentors, who encourage and support young participants to work through their issues by learning new creative ways to express themselves.

While the program works across a range of artistic mediums, including visual arts, performing arts and digital and cross-art forms, this exhibition brings together work from Messengers' visual arts classes and workshops.

The work was created by young people in the program's Belconnen Sculpture and Access programs, Tuggeranong Visual Arts programs and in school holiday workshops.

One stand-out collection on display is a range of wire sculptures of Ngunnawal words created in holiday workshops which were run in partnership with Gugan Gulwan Youth Aboriginal Corporation. As well as being beautiful works of art the sculptures contribute to the important task of revitalising First Nations languages.

Many of the other works on display also explore themes that are important to the program's participants such as, mental health, gender, identity and even selfies.

Tuggeranong Arts Centre CEO Rauny Worm says, 'The Messengers Program works closely with ACT high schools, colleges and community service organisations and continuously proves how essential artistic and creative expression is for adolescent development.'

The exhibition will be officially opened by MLA Rachel Stephen-Smith at 6.30pm on Thursday 19th October and will be on display until Saturday 28th October.

Many thanks go to the program's partner organisations; Belconnen Youth Centre, Belconnen Community Service, Education Directorate NSET teams, Mura Lanyon Youth Centre run by the YWCA, Mental Health Week, and Gugan Gulwan.