2026 Tenant Art Program

Evaluation Report

bridge

Bridge Housing acknowledges the Gadigal, Darug, Bidjigal and Gai-mariagal people as the traditional owners of the lands on which we work, and we pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Always was, always will be, Aboriginal Land.

Executive summary



Connection

The program helped tenants feel more connected to their community.

“[I felt] a part of something”

“It made me feel included, well fed, happy and curious”



Wellbeing

The program was meaningful for tenants and contributed to a greater sense of wellbeing.

“It was very positive. It was good for me.”



Participation

Tenants enjoyed creating, expressing themselves, and telling their stories.

“Got me out of a rut with art. Inspired me. Encouraged my creative practice”

Introduction

The 2026 Tenant Art Program involved 10 local art workshops, one collaborative art day, and the bi-annual Bridge Housing Tenant Art Show. The Art Show was born from the leadership of Bridge's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Tenant Advisory Group (ATTAG), to celebrate truth-telling and belonging through diverse mediums. The program has evolved to encourage all tenants to create, connect, and tell their story through art. Every artwork sold returned 100% to the tenant artist.

Dennis Goulding, an artist born and raised on Gadigal Country, with ancestral ties to Kamilaroi/Gamilaraay Country (Northwest NSW) and Biripi Country (Mid North Coast NSW), led the collaborative art day and curated the Art Show. Dennis is a Create NSW Visual Arts Fellow and 2026 Biennale of Sydney participant.

This report evaluates the program. The aims of the report include:

- **Demonstrate impact:** in line with Bridge's The Difference We Make social impact framework, show how the program made a difference for tenants, including how this difference was felt for different tenant cohorts (age, cultural identity, geography, gender).
- **Support service improvement:** inform targeted community building activities for tenants.
- **Demonstrate our commitment to reconciliation:** evaluate the program in line with our Reconciliation Action Plan.
- **Develop materials for corporate advocacy:** present findings that speak to potential future corporate sponsors, in line with our Advocacy Platform.

The Art Show

The Art Show was designed by the ATTAG to celebrate Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, and it is a key initiative that demonstrates our commitment to reconciliation. The 2026 Art Show was curated by Aboriginal artist Dennis Golding (pictured right). We also held a competition for Aboriginal artists to design the show's feature artwork. Aunty Jenny's 'Robin Redbreast' (pictured left) was selected and used in all promotional materials, including posters, t-shirts and digital collateral.







120 guests attended the official opening (pictured above) and there was a steady flow of guests throughout the week, including Minister Rose Jackson and Archibald Prize winning artist Wendy Sharpe OAM.

Collaborative art day

Dennis led the collaborative art day at Redfern Community Centre – the most well attended art workshop of the program with a total of 24 participants.

During the workshop, Dennis and the participants co-created a large-scale artwork (pictured right). Dennis wanted to encourage participation and communal expression, and the result was a large, four square metre artwork which became the centrepiece of the exhibition.

Tenants explored themes of community, culture and identity through visual motifs that were inspired by their life stories and experience of being social housing tenants. The piece represents the vital role community housing plays in helping people build connections and tell their story.



Art workshops

The Bridge Communities team held 10 local art workshops, where tenants came together to explore creativity, connection and self-expression through a range of artistic activities.

There were two workshops in the eastern suburbs, three in the city and inner west, one in the western suburbs and four in the northern beaches.

The workshops provided welcoming spaces where tenants could learn new skills, share stories and connect with neighbours. A range of art materials were supplied, allowing participants to work across a variety of mediums, creating both individual artworks and collaborative pieces that reflected their experiences, cultures and identities.

Many participants drew on their life experiences, memories and aspirations, using art as a way to communicate ideas that may otherwise have gone unspoken. The resulting artworks showcased the diversity of the communities involved and highlighted the role creative programs can play in building confidence, connection and wellbeing.

Beyond the artworks themselves, the workshops fostered meaningful social connections, creating opportunities for tenants to meet, collaborate and contribute to a shared creative experience. These sessions formed the foundation of the exhibition, with many of the works produced going on to be displayed and celebrated as part of the Tenant Art Show.



Art program snapshot

63

Total participants

42

Attended at least one workshop

24

Attended the collaborative art day

45

Residents exhibited their art at the Art Show

129

Total artworks exhibited



Impact snapshot

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95%

Reported that it was a meaningful experience for them



95%

Felt more connected to their community



90%

Reported a greater sense of wellbeing



95%

Think it is important that Bridge provides programs like this



$5,080

Total sales directly to tenant artists

20 people completed the post-program survey (out of a total of 63 art program participants).

What does this all mean?

Outcome: Our tenants are connected in their community

To respond to local, national and global trends of increased loneliness and social isolation, this year's art program included group workshops for the first time. The vision was to provide opportunities to bring tenants together and connect. This addition to the program had clear success. 95% of participants reported feeling more connected to their community. 88% of those who attended a workshop want to connect with their neighbours more in the future, compared to 75% for those who only exhibited their art but didn't attend workshops. 'To meet new people' was the equal highest reason people participated in the program (equal with 'To create art').

Outcome: Our tenants can better manage their health

There is substantial evidence linking creative expression with positive health and wellbeing outcomes. One of the key objectives of the art program was to facilitate these positive wellbeing outcomes. 90% of participants reported feeling a greater sense of wellbeing from participating in the program. 95% reported that it was a meaningful experience for them. 70% said they feel more confident expressing themselves because of the program.

Outcome: Our tenants have increased opportunities to participate as they choose

At its core, the art program is an opportunity for tenants to create, express themselves, and tell their story through art. 95% reported that they want to create art in the future. 82% of people who exhibited their art reported that they did so to tell their story. 75% reported learning a new skill through the workshops. 95% said it is important to them that Bridge provides programs like this.

Who participated?

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56 y/o

Participant average age (compared to 48 y/o for all residents)

13 y/o

Youngest artist

84 y/o

Oldest artist

55%

Participants live with a disability (compared to 37% of all residents)

47%

Exhibiting artists live in the **Inner West or Western Sydney** (compared to 42% of workshop attendees)

22%

Exhibiting artists live on the **Northern Beaches** (compared to 29% of workshop attendees)

31%

Exhibiting artists live in **Eastern Sydney** (compared to 29% of workshop attendees)

17%

Participants are Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander (compared to 10% of all residents)

45%

Exhibiting artists were born overseas (compared to 36% of all residents)

74%

Participants are female (compared to 53% of all residents)

Demographic analysis

By looking at who participated in the art program and comparing this to our wider resident cohort, we can better understand which groups the program interests and benefits most. This helps us shape initiatives to different cohorts based on their interests and needs.

The positive impacts of the art program were experienced by more older residents, female residents, residents living with a disability, residents born overseas, and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander residents. We can therefore infer that:

The 2026 art program increased connection, wellbeing, creativity and participation, particularly for:

- **Older residents**
- **Female residents**
- **Residents living with a disability**
- **Residents born overseas**
- **Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander residents.**

Another important observation from the demographic analysis was that residents in Western Sydney who attended their local workshops were more likely to go on to exhibit their art, while residents in the Northern Beaches who attended workshops were less likely to exhibit. The likely cause of this was the Art Show's location in Sydney's Inner West (whereas workshops were provided locally).

Networks and partnerships

The Tenant Art Show gives us a direct, human way to connect decision makers, artists, sponsors and the wider sector around the value of community housing.

Government relationships

We were honoured to welcome Minister for Housing and Homelessness the Hon. Rose Jackson MP to the Art Show. Pictured right is Laurie Leigh, Dennis Golding and Aunty Jenny Thomsen King sharing the gallery tour with the Minister – a direct line between tenant voice and housing policy.

Arts and sector networks

Archibald Prize winning artist Wendy Sharpe OAM attended and promoted the exhibition through her networks in collaboration with Australian advocacy campaigners Save Our Arts, extending our reach well beyond the housing sector.

Corporate partnerships

ADP Consulting was our 2026 sponsor. Sponsorship is critical to the Art Show and partnerships like this strengthen our corporate network while showing how business can contribute to positive social outcomes.

Growing the network

There are opportunities to expand the Art Show's strategic partnerships, including a potential sponsorship approach to the 2028 Biennale of Sydney, further elevating tenant stories and awareness of community housing.



Art Show Case Study: Elisabeth



For 35 years, Elisabeth ran art galleries in Newtown and Glebe. She opened her first gallery in the early 1990s in a warehouse on King Street, Newtown. During her three years there, she helped develop Newtown as an arts hub through collaboration with other local art galleries.

Elisabeth's whole family paints and draws, and she has always sketched and worked in oils, watercolour and acrylic.

Despite decades of supporting other artists and running her own galleries, Elisabeth had never exhibited her own work. Inspired by Aunty Jenny and conversations with neighbours, she entered her sketches in the 2026 Art Show, the first time her art had appeared in a gallery.

Elisabeth is now a selling artist and is keen to continue creating and exhibiting her work.

Art Show Case Study: James

Growing up with a love of creativity, James enjoys working with spray paint and stencils. The Art Show reignited his passion in a powerful way, and James decided to enter his artwork, ‘Waiting’. To his surprise and delight, it sold within the first hour.

The night before the Art Show, James had created another piece. Once ‘Waiting’ sold so quickly, he went home and brought in his other piece that same morning. That artwork also sold immediately.

The experience gave James the confidence to keep creating and sharing his work with others. Since the exhibition, James has continued painting, producing several more artworks, including a large feature piece. He says art helps him manage stress and overcome loneliness.



People’s Choice Award

Guests of the Art Show were invited to vote for their favourite artwork via QR codes at the exhibition. Luisa Cortes was the winner with her artwork ‘Maternal Archive’ pictured right. An Australian citizen born in Chile, Luisa works across ceramics, painting, and fibre-based media. Her practice explores memory, migration, identity, and intergenerational connection through tactile and material-led processes. Below is her description of her winning artwork.

Maternal Archive explores the intergenerational bond between mother and daughter through a fragmented ceramic composition assembled into a unified form. Constructed from tile-like elements, it reflects how relationships are shaped through memory, care, shared experience, and emotional inheritance. A traditional Chilean smoking technique was used to create the effect of aged paint, producing atmospheric surface tones that evoke time, memory, and wear.

Clay functions as both material and metaphor, fragile yet strengthened through fire mirroring the resilience of family bonds across distance, migration, and generations. Drawing from personal and cultural heritage, the work reflects on identity, belonging, and material memory within intimate lived experience.



‘Express Yourself’ feedback

An Express Yourself wall was displayed at the Art Show, inviting guests to leave their feedback about the artwork and how they felt at the show.

Guests were also encouraged to contribute colour or even small drawings or artworks to the wall using basic supplies provided.

38 pieces of written feedback and **17** pieces of art were contributed to the wall.



“Congratulations to Bridge Housing and all the artists who were creative and brave enough to share their stories through their beautiful artworks. A wonderful event and truly inspiring.”

“So glad to reconnect with art through this!”

“Thank you for showing us the world through your eyes.”



“Love the creative spirit it sets you free.”

“A crazy amount of talent in a fabulous space. I feel energised and thankful to see it all.”

In summary

Impact

The 2026 art program had a positive impact on tenants in terms of connection, wellbeing, and creative participation. Because of participating in the program, tenants felt more connected to their community, experienced greater wellbeing, want to continue creating art in the future, and want to participate more in Bridge events.

The program's tenant-led origins, Aboriginal artistic leadership, sponsor support and high-profile engagement also reflected commitments in our Reconciliation Action Plan and created a strong platform for advocacy.

Scale and reach

The program was one of our highest attended community-building initiatives: there was sustained workshop engagement, over 20 participants at the collaborative art day, 60 participants in the overall program, and 120 guests at the opening of the Art Show. Participation was particularly strong among older residents, women, residents living with disability, residents born overseas, and Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander residents.

Next steps

The impact, scale, and reach of the program can guide future investment in our community initiatives. The results of this evaluation clearly demonstrate the value of the program, and Bridge should continue to pursue local art workshops and the bi-annual Art Show. These results can also be used to support sponsorship efforts for future programs.

The evidence also highlights the importance of ATTAG co-design to maintain and strengthen Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander participation.