

CONNECT  
THE DOTS



# CONNECT THE DOTS CHARITABLE TRUST

CASE STUDY REPORT BY GEVA DOWNEY  
ROSS, DEMENTIA AUCKLAND OREWA  
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With support from the Ministry of Culture and Heritage, through the Te Tahua Whakahaumarū Creative Arts Recovery and Employment (CARE) Fund, Connect the Dots has been able to successfully enhance access to, and participation in, our art-making and art discussion programmes for older adults, people living with Dementia and adults with intellectual or neurological disabilities.

The consistent and reliable support offered through this Fund has enabled Connect the Dots to partner with charitable organisations. Dementia Auckland is one of the organisations we have chosen to support through the facilitation of free creative arts programmes for their clients and professional development and provision of resources for their Living Well team.

Dementia Auckland runs a range of Living Well groups for people with mild to moderate dementia, including walking groups, exercise or gym groups, Cognitive Stimulation Therapy groups, a dancing group, an art group and more. Clients who attend the service come from a range of ethnic, religious and social backgrounds and may come alone or with their partner or family member who often has the role of their carer.

Connect the Dots began facilitating our Make Moments art programme with the Dementia Auckland Living Well group based in Orewa, North Auckland in November 2022. Group members Ross and his wife of 45 years, Irene, attended these sessions from November 29th 2022. Ross had spent much of his working life as a builder and he and his wife ran their family building company together. This Case Study focuses on Ross and Irene's participation in the Make Moments programme.



When they first arrived Irene was concerned that it may be 'extra work' for her to get Ross to 'have a go'. CTD staff listened to her concerns and mentioned that this session was about creative play, wellbeing and social connection so there was no pressure to produce a 'finished product'.

Their first session involved creating a stencil to make prints with. Some examples were shown and Ross said that he would like to draw a house. He took a serious approach to his work and only felt comfortable using a ruler. He carefully measured the length of all four sides and was interested in showing the different materials needed to show that the roof was different to the walls of the house. His wife explained that it was a symbol of a house and detail was not needed.





This concept was challenging for Ross and Irene felt some frustration to communicate this with Ross. Staff supported their mutual efforts by encouraging what was working well, offering alternative activities and talking about his past experience building and about the materials that Ross was wanting to communicate within the work.



The group grew quickly and became a popular session, the CTD manager responded to the growth by providing an extra assistant to help support sessions.

The extra assistant was able to work closely along side Ross and slowly built a positive, trusting relationship while they made art along side one another. This gave Irene space to not feel responsible for her partner's art making because she saw he was getting one on one attention. The assistant's priority when the session started was to build that supportive relationship.





Changes in Ross' mood and enthusiasm to try new things grew each week. Irene was able to bond with others in a new way and both became important members that contributed to the group's light hearted, humorous and positive culture.

During the last session on May 9 2023, Ross freely painted a loose, abstract work without the assistance of Irene or Ana and slowly built a layered, complex matrix of lines and forms. This was a remarkable development; from needing a ruler, the support of two helpers (the CTD facilitator and his wife, Irene) and him wanting it to be rendered in a realistic way only.

It was wonderful to see him feeling safe enough to take artistic risks, build new friendships and being open to new ways of expressing himself.





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