

# Mental: The Mother Load

Julie Waddington



*More Super Mums, Mental: The Mother Load, 2018, Tasmania. Photo by Bec Thompson*

*Mental: The Mother Load* is a seed creative development project engaging artists who are mothers to explore and research the experience of mental load. This leads to a creative documentary performance exploring the beauty, grotesque and poetic in the madness and mundane of motherhood

Five core performing Artist Mummas - Bryony Geeved, Mel King, Carrie McLean, Rebecca Thomson and Julie Waddington - collaborated and lead investigation through a series of creative practice workshops and online interaction. Artist mothers from across Tasmania (and Australia) were invited to engage with the project and to join an online Facebook community with twice-weekly creative tasks, encouraged to have creative input in a way that suits them without negatively adding to their mental load.

Through this community three 2-hour workshops were offered, covering an engaging range of creative activities including drawing, craft, developing characters, creative writing and movement, alongside the creative tasks and interaction offered. Aspects of the workshops were filmed, and a video made documenting the work.

Stage one concluded with a two days in the studio for the core team, to explore the materials generated along with additional research and personal discoveries. The group reported to a audience of industry peers and participants in an open sharing.

### **Cultural & Economic Impacts:**

- Increased cultural participation for mothers, some of whom with limited capacity to engage in arts
- The success of the Seed Creative Development (Stage One) has given the core team a rich starting point for a more targeted, specific and extensive period of research and creative development for Stage Two - A creative documentary performance.
- 329 members joined within three weeks, and in the first seven weeks 15 creative provocation tasks had been set, with 112 members responding to those tasks a total of 524 times.
- Formation of new partnerships, covering skills and expertise in puppetry, physical theatre and film, creating a cohesive core group artists
- The results of Stage One of the project have been shared with an invited audience of industry peers, community partners and participants, for use in future projects.
- Formation of new networks including Charles Parkinson - Tasmanian Theatre Company, Kelly Drummond Cawthon - kdcWORKS and Moonah Arts Centre and Lucinda Wilson - South Hobart Living Arts Centre, who have offered to support future stages of the project
- Potential partnerships with councils and community organisations discovered to support further participation from a higher number of women

### **Social Impacts:**

- Reduced the social isolation of mothers from a community - mothers are hungry for their voices and stories to be heard
- An overwhelming response from participants indicates their willingness to engage in such a project, both in numbers of women engaging and the quality of the responses
- The creation of a community where the interaction and engagement was positive - honest, raw, emotional, funny and supportive.
- Discovery and acknowledgement of the balance of juggling to manage the project with personal life, with the positives of actively participating in a creative project
- The success of the Facebook group will see it continued, broadening exposure to the arts.

### **Links/socials:**

[Mental: The Mother Load website](#)



**Australian Government**  
**Regional Arts Fund**