

# The 'Art' of Community Engagement

Often recognized as one of the last “bastions” of civilization the prison system and its role in serving the community are often maligned.

And in the case of Bali’s famous Kerobokan prison the local and international media tends to sensationalize the stories – drugs and crime on the inside and the plight of the high profile inmates.

What about the opportunities for rehabilitation and the projects aimed at transforming offenders back into productive members of society?

At times it is not the vision of prison system itself that is the catalyst to rehabilitation; however it is inmate ingenuity teamed along with the compassion and creativity of members of the outside community that is a vital key.

A gala charity evening on 29<sup>th</sup> August at La Finca restaurant in Canggu organized by the Canggu Rotary Club of Bali attracted over two hundred people who enjoyed not only fine food and entertainment, yet also an opportunity to a part of a unique occasion.

The goal - to raise the money required for the installation of a permaculture community garden with grey water treatment plant inside the Kerobokan prison. The results of an auction on the evening saw a substantial sum raised, more than the organizers initial guestimates.

The modal, a first for Bali, to achieve this success is the brainchild of Australian community resilience expert and former chairperson of the Emerald Community House near Melbourne, Mary Farrow who is a regular visitor to the island.

Mary has been instrumental in creating a diverse organizational collaboration establishing partnerships to deliver sustainability, environmental improvement and human well-being development between the Emerald Community House, IDEP Foundation, the Canggu Rotary Club and the Kerobokan prisoner arts department.

A few months ago these parties did not know each other and were engaged and inspired by the prison arts and education program, that is prisoner lead and supported by the warden of Kerobokan.

IDEP is dedicated to community empowerment via education aimed at sustainable development, disaster preparedness, emergency response and community recovery. IDEP will aid the inmates in transforming an area of wasteland in the prison into a sustainable, organic permaculture garden providing fresh vegetables for the prisoner’s diets and also life skills that may be utilized upon release from prison.

The items auctioned to raise the money were paintings created by the Kerobokan inmates.

Art not only has become a successful rehabilitation activity that engages the inmates in positive self expression, yet it delivers greater capacity via the developing networks, sustainability, community engagement, wellbeing and restoration of the land. Cost to the government - nothing. In fact the prison benefits by capturing 30% of the income generated by the sales of the auctioned artwork.

What’s more according to Farrow, the prisoner lead creative initiatives will ultimately lead to opportunities for academic research regarding the emerging Kerobokan model of rehabilitation.

Art drives this project and becomes the catalyst for community development. It brings people together – individuals, business, prisoners, charities, education and disaster preparedness organizations focusing on environmental solutions and sustainability, and rehabilitation of people.

Art is an invaluable human resource that serves to unite and sustain communities that are geared towards creating a world in which we wish to belong.

(Mary Farrow will appear at the Ubud Writers and Readers Festival 13<sup>th</sup> October along with the 2013 Australian Archibald Painting Prize winner Ben Quilty discussing empowering communities and individuals through art, and 15<sup>th</sup> October with high profile Australian criminal and human rights lawyer Julian Burnside and others on the panel - ‘A Decision in Time’).