



PRESS RELEASE

Creativity Australia singing in the new decade – March 2010

Since its launch just over 12 months ago, **Creativity Australia** has gone from strength to strength in its mission to bring creativity and creative programs to the people of Australia. By bringing creative thinking and leadership into their organisations, employers can increase wellbeing, productivity, employee cohesion and innovation, all of which are more important than ever in this troubled economic environment. Creativity Australia is also developing a number of innovative programs bridging social capital for disadvantaged people and communities, businesses and government.

Most notably, Creativity Australia has achieved wonderful success with its **WITH ONE VOICE** pilot program - **Melbourne Sings** choir. This is a strategic partnership with Sofitel Melbourne On Collins, Allan's Music and various government agencies. The **Melbourne Sings** choir brings together employees from Melbourne businesses and disadvantaged people and migrants from the Fitzroy and Collingwood housing estates.

This is an opportunity to bridge social capital as well as provide employment pathways and mentoring for residents from the housing estates. For participants it is an opportunity to develop networks and unlock creative potential. Participants find their unique voice and learn how to lead and be part of a team. Melbourne Sings have already performed for key events including the World Parliament of Religions, Breakthrough Conference, Bushfire Benefit, Diversity@work awards, the Launch of a new digital inclusion program for Infoxchange and the Serious Women's Business Gala Conference Dinner and are being approached to create performances for a range of major special events, festivals and national and international conferences celebrating cultural diversity.

Creativity Australia has commenced a number of other programs including **The Royal Children's Hospital Choir** which is designed to bring staff from different departments together on a regular basis to improve wellbeing, social cohesion and innovation across the hospital, **Geelong Sings** and **Mind over Music** - a new program designed as a positive intervention to assist young people with emerging mental health issues at Orygen Youth Health. Other *With One Voice* choirs commencing in 2010 include **Greater Dandenong Sings**, **Maribyrnong Sings** and **Sunshine Sings**, focusing on single migrant mothers will commence in early 2010 supported by Fosters in the Community. Many more programs are in the pipeline pending funding.

The choir programs are unique in that they deliberately bring people together from all walks of life and ages, cutting across socioeconomic, cultural and even linguistic barriers in the pursuit of making music together. Indeed, a significant proportion of the population of community housing estates are recent migrants to Australia, and the choir provides important opportunities for creating a sense of belonging to mainstream Australia and networking for employment. This has already led to some of the migrants gaining employment through improved self esteem and skills developed through their new networks.

For more information about Creativity Australia, please contact **Founder Tania de Jong AM** on 03 9682 9686 or enquiries@creativityaustralia.org.au Visit www.creativityaustralia.org.au



THE QUESTIONS THE ANSWERS

What is Creativity Australia (CA)?

CA was established in November 2008 as a not-for-profit organisation partnering with business, education, health, community and charity groups, government and philanthropists.

By encouraging greater creativity and innovation, CA will offer new and exciting paths to enable personal wellbeing, social acceptance and inclusion, and highly productive and happier members of our great Australian community.

Who is involved?

CA has engaged with a number of community leaders and businesses. Patrons and partners include Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC, Hugh Morgan AC, Allan Fels AO, Committee for Melbourne, Sofitel Melbourne On Collins and VECCI.

In addition, CA has a number of Ambassadors and “Thought Leaders”; leading members of the business and wider communities, to promote the organisation and to stimulate the discussion of the role creativity plays in improving people’s lives, organisations and society.

What is CA’s Vision and Mission?

Our Vision is to unlock the innate creativity present in all human beings, so as to improve mental health and wellbeing, social cohesion, innovation and productivity.

Our Mission is to develop sustainable and creative programs and advocate for creative thinking and leadership around the country in the workforce, and in partnership with the community.

CA sees a special role in reaching out to disadvantaged sections of the community to provide opportunities for people to tap their own creative potential.

What initiatives are already being developed by CA?

- **Mind over Music:** Music and other creative programs for wellbeing/positive mental health in partnership with mental health institutes and researchers.
- **With One Voice** – an enormous range of community and corporate choir programs
- **The Battle of the Choirs** – major live event
- **Inspiring Minds** – programs for an out performance culture to improve leadership and skills in creativity, innovation and wellbeing.
- **Migrant Mentors** – casual and more formal programs to assist migrants to gain self esteem and skills leading to employment.

What specific programs is CA offering to organisations?

CA is working with organisations to provide the following creative thinking and leadership programs tailored to individual workplaces and corporate cultures:

1. Keynote speeches, forums and debates on creative leadership and innovation.
2. The Inspiring Minds/Brainstorm Series: 'Creative booster' sessions for conferences, retreats, board meetings, break-out sessions – incl. Finding Your Voice, The Corporate Storyteller etc
3. Customised programs to engender a climate of innovation amongst leaders or special operating units.
4. Development opportunities through secondment of a talented employee to work with CA
5. With One Voice Corporate Choirs and Battle of the Choirs (more info below).
6. Limited places are available in mixed community/business choirs. The cost per employee includes a donation towards the cost of sponsoring the participation of one disadvantaged person.

How will the Corporate Choir series work?

The *With One Voice* and *Battle of the Corporate Choir* programs will encourage individual organisations or mixed community partnership groups to form and support staff choirs to learn how to sing and work as a special team together.

Through *With One Voice*, CA will help organisations establish and train their choirs weekly over 12 months, including arranging for outstanding choir leaders to work with them. CA will help find and organise opportunities for the choirs to perform and make links to disadvantaged members of the wider community including schools to work with them in the common endeavour of tapping individual creativity and imagination, and unlocking potential.

We envisage that the concept will appeal to companies and government agencies who not only want to foster their own teamwork, wellbeing and innovation, but see a social mission in encouraging their staff to engage with disadvantaged people in the wider community.

The *Battle of the Choirs* series will generate a competitive opportunity for national recognition and prizes, and provide opportunities for wider corporate and media exposure to the CA message and programs. The first is planned for 2010.

Will CA sponsor research into stimulating and nurturing personal and organizational creativity?

CA will initiate related research, including wellbeing surveys for choir members and longitudinal studies by leading research institutes and universities to assess the effects of CA-supported programs on personal wellbeing, employee retention and productivity, mental health status and engagement between individuals and their communities.

How is CA being funded?

CA is a not-for-profit organisation with a business and financial plan. It will derive income to support its initiatives and programs from:

- Philanthropic donations to The CA Fund to assist disadvantaged people and communities
- State and federal government assistance for which CA is eligible; and
- Fees from corporate advisory activities, entry fees for participating in the Corporate Choirs programs, and media rights for any events given radio or TV coverage.
- Fundraising events

For the WITH ONE VOICE choral programs, packages are developed for individual organizations and communities, with costs being determined on an individual basis.

For more information, please contact Founder Tania de Jong AM on (03) 9682 9686 or email Tania@creativityaustralia.org.au and visit www.creativityaustralia.org.au



THE PEOPLE BEHIND THE CREATIVITY

Patrons

Dame Elisabeth Murdoch AC, DBE
Lady Marigold Southey AC
Professor Allan Fels AO
Hugh Morgan AC
Emeritus Professor John Hay AC

Ambassadors

Professor Graham Burrows AO
John Calvert-Jones AM
Terry Campbell AO
Dr Alan Finkel AM
Professor Andrea Hull AO
Sam Lipski AM

Board

Sue Crook, Peter Kronborg, Sue Larkin, Kelly O'Dwyer,
Tania de Jong AM (Founding Chair)

Thought Leaders (more to come)

Mary Barlow
Terry Barnes
Mark Bergin
Rufus Black
Graham Bradley AM
Julie Caldecott
Alan Castleman
Frank Cicutto
James Demetriou
John Denton
Wayne Dyson
Saul Eslake
Hugh Evans
Senator Mitch Fifield
Jo Fisher
Stephen Grant
Jane Harvey
Elaine Henry OAM
John Higgins
Assoc. Professor John Kelly AM
Leon Kempler OAM
Peter Kronborg
Dr Janine Kirk AM
Dr Simon Longstaff
Professor Patrick McGorry
Andrew Norton
Jan Owen AM
Michael Rennie
Carol Schwartz AM
Clive Scott
Professor John Seybolt
Dr Peter Shergold AC
Steven Skala AO
The Honorable John So
Evan Thornley
Alison Watkins
Peter Williams
Professor Martin Westwell
Professor Ghil'ad Zuckermann

Government Partners

Department of Immigration and Citizenship
City of Greater Dandenong
City of Maribyrnong

Creativity Partners

ACEL
All About Travel
Allans Music
Australia Israel Chamber of Commerce
Australian Secondary Principals Association
Barwon Health
Barwon Water
BDO Corporate Finance
CEDA
Centre for Social Impact
Centre for Sustainability Leadership
Committee for Melbourne
Company Matters
Cornwell Design
Deakin University
De Bono Institute
Diversitat
Eastside Printing
Efront Web Design
Encompass
Go Fundraise
GPAC
Hawker Britton
Infoxchange
InterRISK
Kate Scott: Streamer Design & Communication
Kwan
L'Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival
Multicultural Arts Victoria
Music Theatre Australia
PageUp People
Principals Australia
Pro Bono Australia
Quantumlinx
Sofitel Melbourne On Collins
St James Ethics Centre
TAC
The Banner Lady
Thinking.com.au
Travellers Aid
VECCI
Victorian Public Sector Continuous Improvement
Network
Waterfront Christian Church

Wellbeing Partners

Australian Centre on Quality of Life,
Deakin University
Net Balance Foundation
North Richmond Community Health Centre
Orygen Youth Mental Health
Royal Children's Hospital

Foundation Partners

Angior Family Foundation
Edward Wilson Estate
Fosters in the Community
Ian Potter Foundation
National Australia Trustees Ltd
Pierce Armstrong Foundation
RE Ross Trust
Scanlon Foundation



TANIA DE JONG AM

BIOGRAPHY

Tania de Jong is the inspiration, co-founder and artistic director of Pot-Pourri and of Music Theatre Australia (MTA) one stop entertainment consultancy and event production company.

A graduate of the University of Melbourne (LL.B. Hons.), and the Victorian College of the Arts (Opera, Music Theatre and Voice), Tania is considered one of Australia's most talented sopranos. She has performed with the Victoria State Opera and as a soloist with a number of orchestras.

In 2006 Tania received the Ernst and Young Australian Social Entrepreneur of the Year Award for her work with The Song Room. The Song Room, a charity founded by Tania, has brought music and performing arts programs to over 200,000 disadvantaged children and communities throughout Australia. Tania's other awards include the "Outstanding Individual Contribution to Australian Culture", Churchill Fellowship and the Accessibility Award in The Melbourne Awards. She was recently named Brainlink Woman of Achievement 2009.

Tania is on the Board of Child Abuse Prevention and Research Australia. She was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in June 2008 for service to the arts as a performer and entrepreneur and through the establishment and development of music and arts enrichment programs for schools and communities. She has recently founded Creativity Australia to bring greater wellbeing, innovation and engagement into the workforce, and in partnership with disadvantaged communities, through creative thinking and leadership programs. (Trivia: She attended college in the USA on a tennis scholarship.)

*"Our society is fragmented and our ability to communicate with other people and express ourselves is limited. This undermines our fundamental human values, sense of family and community. **Creativity Australia** is about inspiring more productive individuals, organisations and communities."*

Tania de Jong AM, Founding Chair

Nathalie Mbala's story

- Nathalie is a migrant from Cameroon. She left there to escape the dictatorial regime and make a better life for her family.
- She arrived in Australia with no English. She and her kids learnt English.
- She then tried to find a job. Eventually she joined the Brotherhood of St Laurence's "Giving a Chance" program to learn pre-vocational skills and about Australian workplaces.
- Tania came and presented to her class about joining "Melbourne Sings" choir program which brings together disadvantaged migrants and employees and executives. She told the class that they would build self esteem, make new friends and feel more settled in Australia through joining the choir. Maybe they would get a job too, through networks they became a part of.
- Three members of the class joined the choir including Nathalie.
- A few weeks into choir Nathalie was crying at choir. We asked her what was wrong. She said she had a job interview. We said that was great. She said: "No, I do not think I can get the job."
- Some of the recruitment experts and coaches in the choir mentored Nathalie for her job interview.
- Two weeks later she came to choir beaming. She had got the job at ANZ on the spot. Her self esteem improved and now she has become a spokesperson of the choir.
- She recently spoke at two events in front of hundreds of people to introduce the choir and tell her story. (Diversity@work Awards Dinner and Serious Women's Business Dinner). On both occasions, the audience were in tears especially when she said the below words.

"The choir is an escape for me. To open my heart, to be relaxed, happy and forget about all the problems. It's an open door that you can only see flowers in front and be happy. Enjoy the perfume of the song. The choir really had an important role in my confidence. The diversity in the choir is really huge. Tania, Anton, Shaun... all of them were there for me. And when I got my job interview to prepare they gave me a hand to improve my confidence and to take that step... it was really hard for me. I was so nervous, so emotional. I couldn't believe I would have a job. Then I have the job. I say thanks to BSL, thanks to ANZ who recruited me and most importantly thanks to Tania [de Jong] for her support and all of the members of the choir." **Nathalie – recent arrival from Cameroon**

Please see video clips of our programs here and Melbourne Sings. The choir has a beautiful spirit! Watch here, especially the interviews (including ones with Nathalie)!

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7avA8nrzrYA>
<http://creativityaustralia.org.au/index.php>
www.creativityaustralia.org.au

P.S. Nathalie introduced the choir with her story at the recent SWB Conference. After telling the audience how she was having trouble getting to choir since her hours at work had changed, the Head of the ANZ Private Bank was so moved by her story and the choir that she made it her personal quest to ensure that Nathalie worked from 9 to 5! Now Nathalie can attend choir each Tuesday at Sofitel and cook her children's dinner.