

# Around Town

Editor: Tony Valentini  
 Melbourne  
 town



## Voices carry

**Community choirs both lift the spirit and forge bonds, says Bridget a'Beckett, conductor of local choir Footscray Sings**

The joy to be had from singing your heart out is infectious, cathartic and healing all at once. That's something soprano and entrepreneur Tania de Jong – who launched Creativity Australia – understands. Her non-profit organisation is dedicated to bringing about social and economic change. The 13 choirs of its With One Voice programme are a testament to this.

Bridget a'Beckett is the conductor of the Footscray Sings choir, who rehearse every Thursday evening at the Footscray Community Arts Centre. Joining requires a tax-deductible donation, and no experience is necessary. At the moment they're 25 members strong, but hope to reach 60 by the end of the year.

Having grown up around music, a'Beckett found that in adulthood she started craving that sense of community that playing or singing together can bring. "I was doing my

own music for years and I ended up not enjoying that process," she says. "I wasn't getting the joy out of it and I felt that there was a competition for work. So I pulled back from everything and shifted my focus. I realised how much community was a drawcard for me."

**"The choir is open and friendly, a real mix of cultures"**

As a'Beckett points out, Footscray is home to people of every background and level of opportunity. "We have some people that are unemployed and on pensions and some that are in very good positions. I love seeing these unlikely friendships blossom and the confidence that it gives both parties."

It's obvious a'Beckett has a great fondness for the choir members, and each has their own story: from Michelle, who is recovering from a brain injury and finds the choir helps with her memory and language skills; to Ros, full of



energy and always ready to welcome newcomers; and Neil, who claps to his own rhythm. The rehearsal *Time Out* attends is involves laughter, spontaneous tap-dancing and supper. The choir sang at a'Beckett's own wedding last year – something she's very proud of, and nominates as one of her favourite With One Voice moments. The choir's ongoing project is Sing Your Story, a celebration of Footscray's diversity. "It's about building our profile and trying to build our numbers so the choir replicates the diversity of Footscray," a'Beckett explains. "What's lovely is that it's so open

and friendly; the perfect place for a real mix of cultures to create that sense of belonging." There will be a Sing Your Story concert in November, but in the meantime, all of Victoria's 12 With One Voice choirs, from Ashburton to Frankston, will combine this month for the annual With One BIG Voice concert – that's 300 voices singing in unison, along with the Sydney Sings choir. *Tim Hunter*

**With One BIG Voice** Melbourne Town Hall, 90-120 Swanston St, Melbourne 3000. 03 9658 9779. [www.creativityaustralia.org.au](http://www.creativityaustralia.org.au). 3-5.30pm. \$20-\$30. Sun Sep 15.

**Cor**  
**How m**  
**blacke**  
**a few t**  
**time to**  
**By Gal**  
 Mixing  
 a keync  
 over ve  
 and me  
 Gorrow  
 tapped  
 well an  
 Withi  
 has spr  
 Melbou  
 relocate  
 Hira, a  
 under C  
 to beco  
 conscio  
 says Ti  
 or medi  
 they ea  
 [askin  
 nourish  
 "[At C  
 nourish  
 from ex  
 listenin  
 they're  
 other p  
 same st  
 It sou  
 Bondi h  
 growin  
 TedX-a  
 who ar  
 to show