
SING FOR JOY, AND TOGETHERNESS

written by Alistair Finlay | 22/05/2019



Welcoming: Creativity Australia's Programs Manager, Nathan Lange, and UFS head, Lynne McLennan, on the first night of Ballarat's With One Voice community choir. Photo: ALISTAIR FINLAY

SOMETHING wonderful is happening at the UFS administration building on Armstrong Street North in Soldiers Hill.

People from across the spectrum of Ballarat's community are coming together to sing.

Known as a With One Voice community choir, the initiative is a joint effort by UFS and Creativity Australia and Nathan Lange is CA's Programs Manager.

"One of the things we try and focus on is that loneliness and isolation are becoming growing problems in our society," he said. "People are finding less opportunities to connect, especially with people they may not know, or have an opportunity to know.

"Our choirs are really trying to provide spaces where people from all walks of life can connect and share."

Founded by soprano Tania de Jong AM, With One Voice seeks to bring people together through singing.

It's a model that's been successful in 24 other places across Australia, including Melbourne, Geelong and Mildura.

The repertoire is varied, and Mr Lange said that sometimes the choirs will aim for a public performance, although that's not the ultimate goal of the effort.

There's also more than just singing, with participants encouraged to take part in a Wish List session, where you can ask anything.

All that's followed by a light supper is at the end of each rehearsal.

"We think singing is a really nice way of bringing everyone together," Mr Lange said.

"There's no auditions, everyone just wanders in, you don't have to be able to sing well, although we think most people can. There's also lots of studies of neuro-scientific benefits of singing, so it actually helps. It does things to your brain that you can't get anywhere else."

The With One Voice choir and Creativity Australia sync up well with UFS' aim of a healthy communities through a number of different approaches. Lynne McLennan is the organisation's CEO.

"UFS is a social enterprise and we like to support things that build the health and wellbeing of our community," she said. "[With One Voice] is a proven concept, it's a diversity choir, so it's for all ages, all abilities, and it's also for people from disadvantaged backgrounds."

The With One Voice community choir meets every Wednesday, 6pm to 7.30pm, at the UFS Administration Office, 206 Armstrong Street North, Soldures Hill. Visit creativityaustralia.org.au/choirs/ballarat for more information and to register.